Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

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Seeing Beneath the Surface

By Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

> *Bhikkhus*, these seven perceptions or contexts, when developed and frequently practiced, are of great fruit and great benefit. They are included in the deathless and bring the deathless to its conclusion.

What seven?

1-The *saññā* (perception, context) of the non-beautiful,

2- the context of death,

3- the context of the loathsomeness of eating,

4- the context of non-delight in regard to the whole world,

5- the context of *anicca*,

6- the context of *dukkha* in *anicca*,

7- the context of*anattā*in *dukkha*.

These seven contexts, when developed and frequently practiced, are of great fruit and great benefit. They are included in the deathless and bring the deathless to its conclusion.

1- When the context of the non-beautiful is developed and frequently practiced, it is of great fruit and great benefit. That is what I said and in reference to what, was it said?

When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of non-beautiful, and often lives with such an intent, his mind shrinks back, goes in the opposite direction and turns away from engaging in sexual intercourse, and either *upekkhā* or the counterpart, other shore (*patikūla*), gets established.

Just as a chicken's feather thrown into the fire shrinks back and shrivels. In the same way, a *bhikkhu* whose mind is accustomed to the context of non-beautiful, and often lives with such an intent, his mind shrinks back, goes in the opposite direction and turns away from engaging in sexual intercourse.

If a *bhikkhu* whose mind is accustomed to the context of non-beautiful aims at sexual intercourse or does not have the counterpart established, he should know: "for me the context of non-beautiful is not developed, for me there is no difference in former distinction, for me there is no strong development." In that way he knows.

If, when a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of non-beautiful, and often lives with such an intent, his mind shrinks back, goes in the opposite direction and turns away from engaging in sexual intercourse, and either *upekkhā* or the counterpart gets established. He should know: "for me the context of non-beautiful is well developed, for me there is a difference in former distinction, for me there is a strong development." In that way he considers.

Bhikkhus, when the context of the non-beautiful is developed and frequently practiced, it is of great fruit and great benefit. It brings the deathless to its culmination and conclusion…

– An 7.49

The practice of *asubha* is about attending to the ugly context or non-beautiful side of a beautiful thing, rather than attending to something else that is ugly. You need to see through the beautiful thing to the other side of it, which is simultaneously present; otherwise the attraction to the beautiful will not be stopped. This is because the attraction to beauty is not in the beauty itself, but in how you perceive it.

Many people try to practice *asubha* by getting rid of the beautiful and replacing it with some other ugly thing. This approach treats the two as separate entities rather than recognizing the presence of both within the same phenomenon, and implies blaming the beautiful for any disturbance. But by doing so, you fail to see that the problem is actually in your attitude towards it.

The right approach is to attend to the beautiful things correctly when they arise; with the right attention, and discern their opposite side or counterpart that is implicitly present in the background. This way, you

can see through the beauty and realize that it is just 'less ugly'. Such a context then serves as a basis for the relinquishing of passion towards the beautiful.

Even if you are not currently engaging in sensual pleasure, as long as you maintain the view that pleasure is valuable, you are keeping the basis for future lust to arise. Only if you fully understand the danger in sensual gratification can you free yourself from sensuality once and for all. Developing the context of danger means discerning the implicit characteristics of what you are attending, with the chief characteristic being the danger. By discerning the implicit danger long enough, you will not need to maintain that context because it is not something that you create, but rather it is something that you uncover.

> 2-…When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of death, their mind draws back from attachment to life, and either *upekkhā* or the counterpart gets established…(continues as above)

The counterpart of life: death, is always present in that negative sense, even if you don't attend to it. If you understand this, you will experience disenchantment with life, and it will be impossible for you to remain attracted to it. Passion towards life is not the product of life itself. It comes from thinking or having a view that life is in your control, from feeling like it will not end or will last forever, i.e ignoring the context of death. By removing these misconceptions, you remove the basis for passion towards life. You don't need to seek out death or the possibility of death because it's already here.

You also don't need to deny life to remove misconceptions about it. It is the same principle as how you can 'get rid of' sensual thoughts indirectly: when a sensual thought arises, you must not welcome it or entertain it. And by enduring it long enough, the thought will eventually go away.

Similarly, you can free yourself from death by seeing the danger in life and thus indirectly removing the slightest passion towards it. By removing passion towards life, you remove the basis for death to apply to you any longer. Then, when this body falls apart, you will not be appearing anywhere else because you have severed any bond with the entire domain of *saṃsāra*.

> 3-…When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of the loathsomeness of eating, their mind draws back from craving for taste, and either *upekkhā*or the counterpart gets established…

When you eat, your default mode is to prioritize the pleasure of eating. You put taste first, even when you're starving. You may not even realize that you're doing this, but you are automatically eating out of pleasure rather than out of necessity. The evidence for this is the fact that you eat even when you are not hungry.

However, there is another side to eating: the fact that it's something you have to do. It's a necessity, not just a source of pleasure. When you take this necessity for granted and cover it up with delight in eating, you become picky and start preferring certain tastes over others. But no matter how much you prioritize taste and delight in food, cooking and recipes, the fact remains that you still need to eat – you are subjected to that physical need. Whether you enjoy your food or not makes no difference to that situation on which your life depends.

> "Hunger is the foremost illness; Determinations are the foremost dis-ease. For one knowing this, as it really is; *Nibbāna*is the foremost ease."
>
> – Dhp 203

This is a reminder that hunger is a significant affliction. By ignoring, or simply being unaware of the pressure and unpleasantness of being subjected to the necessity of eating, you end up putting the pleasure and taste first. But if you acknowledge the fact that food is a necessity that you must fulfill, then whether you're starving or not, you can keep the context of why you need to eat in mind. Regardless of how enjoyable or unpleasant the eating experience may be, it still stems from the unpleasant fact of hunger which you are subjected to.

So by seeing the necessity of food as primary and taste as secondary, you can become dispassionate towards taste without trying to suppress it through various techniques. You can still taste something agreeable, but no amount of agreeable or disagreeable taste will disturb your mind or pervert the right order of putting first what is second and second what is first: taste always comes second to hunger. So if there is no need

for food, you would not engage with it. And through recognising hunger as the foremost illness and that determinations (that determine our life – such as the necessity of food) as the foremost dis-ease, you can understand that *Nibbāna*, or the state of liberation, is the foremost ease.

> 4-…When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of non-delight in regard to the whole world, their mind draws back from the various beautiful things in the world, and either *upekkhā* or the counterpart gets established…

This context is developed by recognizing the danger of delight. The perception of non-delight is for the uprooting of the inherent delight or joy in regard to the world, senses and sense objects.

The word 'delight' refers to that subtle attitude of acceptance or looking forward to something; things that are pleasing and agreeable. Agreeable things are not a problem in themselves. The problem is you being unable to *not* delight in the prospect of pleasure. That is where the danger is.

And so, delight itself is what renders you blind to the inherent danger in being bound to delighting in agreeable and pleasant things. If you genuinely apprehend and recognise that danger, it is impossible to continue to delight in, or be attracted to those things.

'Non-delight' does not mean you must hate beautiful things. You simply do not take up the pleasure in them anymore. If something is agreeable, you acknowledge it as such, but there is no sense of taking up the pleasure i.e delighting. Similarly, if something is disagreeable, you recognize it as such, but there is no resistance to it.

Also, you can't simply create a lack of delight out of thin air. The only way to practice non-delight is by intentionally preventing yourself from delighting. This involves contemplating and acknowledging the potential dangers that come with the things that bring you pleasure. By consistently cultivating such a state of non-delight over time, you won't have to continually remind yourself of the dangers, because they have always been a natural part of those things. This is why freedom from those things is possible in the first place.

Merely saying no to pleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches, doesn't automatically grant you a true understanding of delight. You have the ability to restrain yourself and let go of non-essential experiences, based on understanding that the pleasure they bring can be detrimental. But there are certain things, such as eating, that you cannot completely avoid. Even the Buddha, during his time as a *bodhisatta*, attempted to starve himself in the belief that it would lead to ultimate freedom, and came to realize that this approach was incorrect. The issue was never the food itself: it is your attachment to the delight derived from it that binds you to the aimless wanderings of *saṃsāra*.

> 5-…When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of *anicca*, their mind draws back from acquisitions, honors, and fame, and either *upekkhā* or the counterpart gets established…

The counterpart to acquisition, ownership, honors, and fame is the understanding of non-ownership, the realization that possession is impossible—this is *anicca*. *Anicca* signifies change, but simply stating "everything is changing" lacks a personal connection. You need to perceive your own *anicca*: your experiences, ownership, body, senses, feelings, and life are all *subject to change*. If seeing *anicca* were to mean seeing a thing disappear, you would have to be dead to understand that life is *anicca*, but then that understanding would not be possible. Here lies the essence of the matter: recognizing that something is "subject to change" implies that the potential for change is inherent within it, even as the thing itself remains unchanged.

So, to grasp that things are subject to change and subject to suffering you should not wait for circumstances to transform before attempting to understand *anicca*. You need to seek understanding while things are still circumstantially stable and while your life is present. You want to comprehend that change is an inherent aspect, an intrinsic characteristic of anything that has arisen.

The nature of change reveals the nature of non-mastery, non-ownership, and the impossibility of control. While things are manifested, you can exert some level of influence and control. You have agency in your life at this moment. However, fundamentally, you will lose that influence when life itself decides to change—when you begin to experience the decline of your physical body or when you pass away.

Acquisitions, honors, and fame all contribute to the escalation of one's sense of self. In the process of practice, a person initially focuses on eliminating the most obvious forms of conceit, such as sensuality and anger. However, as the practice deepens, one gradually relinquishes subtler acquisitions related to nationality, lineage, family, cultural affiliations, and so on.

Being popular is inherently desired and favored by people, while obscurity and insignificance is inherently disliked. This is what leads people to defensively react to criticism, even when there is no rational basis for it. Yet all of that concern around reputation and self-image is built upon the appropriation of those simple things that are so close that they are taken for granted: your feelings, your experience as a whole. So if one learns to recognise the impermanence of experience at this basic, intimate level, one will naturally develop a discerning mind that sees through any social pressures.

Rather than merely acknowledging the impermanence of things in general, right contemplation involves recognizing that our present experience arises from the functioning of our body and senses: these five aggregates. Despite having some agency in our actions and decisions, we fundamentally lack control over the changing nature of these aggregates. Our entire domain of control is intertwined with their impermanence, and when they change, our sense of control and the world we have constructed will be swept away. By recognising this through your present experience, you can understand that even what is currently within your control, is *subject to change.* And that's enough: you don't have to wait for external changes or seek 'proof' of impermanence in particular things. You simply need to refrain from unwholesome actions in regard to things, and based on this, discern that those things have impermanence (*anicca)* as their inherent nature, whether you want it or not. Diligently cultivating and maintaining that context would result in the complete fading away of acquisitions, dependence on honors, fame, and notions of conceit.

When you cultivate the understanding of *anicca* and let go of attachments, criticism from others will no longer upset your mind. You become unconcerned with what people think of you, whether their judgments are fair or unfair. The irrational fear of blame no longer distorts your perspective. The pressure to shape others' perception of you, rooted in conceit, also dissipates. You come to realize that you cannot control others' opinions. While many people grasp this concept intellectually, the true transformation occurs when you emotionally detach from the need for validation and are undisturbed by blame or criticism. You maintain clarity in understanding the intentions behind someone's criticism and can objectively assess if there is validity in their points. If you were indeed wrong, you have no issue acknowledging and rectifying it, as you are not irrationally defending your own conceited ownership. Likewise, when baseless criticism arises, you recognize its absurdity, falsehood, or irrelevance. There is no pressure to correct or ensure everyone knows the truth. You remain grounded in your understanding and are free from the burden of rectifying the world to fit a particular perception.

> 6-…When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of *dukkha* in *anicca*, an acute context of danger becomes settled in him toward indolence, laziness, slackness, heedlessness, lack of effort, and unreflectiveness, just as one would have fear towards one's executioner with a drawn-out sword…

The context of danger needs to be established: the context that change of an unfavorable kind can occur at any time. Once you recognise the weight of that situation, you will feel the discomfort which is inherent in the fact that your very being is not your own. In other words, if you recognise *anicca* correctly, you will be recognising the inherent discomfort of your situation – the *dukkha* will become apparent. And the clearer that context is, the more of a 'sense of urgency' will develop.

> 7-…When a *bhikkhu* becomes accustomed to the context of *anattā*in what is *dukkha*, his mind is devoid of I-making, mine-making, and conceit regarding this conscious body and all external objects; he has overcome all measurements due to conceiving, is peaceful and well liberated…

"Measurements due to conceiving" means what you conceive you appropriate. You are measured and defined by the things you appropriate (take as "mine"), such as your form, feelings, perceptions, intentions and consciousness. When those things change, you are thus affected. Removal of the conceivings on the other hand, means that whatever happens with the things you used to conceive will not affect you anymore. You will no longer be *measured* by it.

There's No Love In Loving-kindness

By Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

Q: Our recent discussions have centred around cultivating the Brahmavihāras. From my perspective, it's crucial to differentiate and comprehend each of the four components of an unobstructed Brahmavihāra mind – namely, *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* – individually. But only after establishing and stabilising *mettā*, can one start discerning *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* 'one by one'.

Nm: Instead of saying that it's developed 'one by one' it is more accurate to say that it's developed 'one within the other'. Through understanding what *mettā* is, you understand the principle of all four Brahmavihāras. Then within that understanding and development of *mettā*, you can develop *karuṇā*, and within *karuṇā*, you get to build *muditā;* which then results in the fulfilment of *upekkhā*. You don't abandon *mettā* to develop *karuṇā*, or *karuṇā* to develop *muditā*, nor do you leave all three to develop *upekkhā*. *Upekkhā* encompasses them all. But to arrive at it, you have to go "through" them all. *Upekkhā* is founded upon *mettā*. It's the same in terms of *jhana*; if you keep following the principle of the first *jhana*, you will arrive at the fourth.

Q: Regarding mettā specifically, it refers to an attitude of non-aversion rather than engaging in friendly social interactions or cultivating forms of love.

Nm: Correct. The framework of *Brahmavihāra* centres on cultivating a mind of non-aversion. This means that even when encountering unpleasant sights, sounds, smells, tastes, or touches, one does not have ill will towards them. The focus is on prioritising the protection of the mind of non-aversion, regardless of the content of one's everyday experience.

Q: This differs from popular ideas of *mettā* practice, which usually consist of generating love and sending it in various directions.

Nm: The problem with this is that such a practice will not uproot craving, which is why that is not what is meant by the description of *mettā* in the suttas. People prefer that method because it is more palpable, and 'nicer,' and it's certainly a helpful way of relating to people. In any case, it is better to think of people with loving kindness rather than hatred, because if you are not hating them, then more often than not they will not hate you back; which will help you out at that societal level. So I am not saying that you shouldn't do it – by all means think positively about everyone, but don't mistake that for practising the Dhamma.

It is dangerous to rely on personal feelings as the basis for one's practice: simply because something makes you feel good, does not necessarily mean that it is the practice of Dhamma. Our emotions are shaped by our *resistance to* or *indulgence in* certain behaviours or experiences, and therefore, they cannot be relied upon to determine what is wholesome or unwholesome. So it is crucial to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the Buddha's concept of metta, understand its deeper meaning and practise it with wisdom and discernment, rather than relying on subjective feelings.

The term *mettā* refers to the general framework or *mind of non-aversion*. It is important to emphasise this because one may not harbour aversion towards someone in particular, but still hold hatred towards another, indicating the lack of *mettā* in one's general mindset. Even if one does not hate anyone specifically, the absence of that particular aversion alone does not signify the development of *mettā*. To truly cultivate this mindset, one must make a conscious effort to abandon all *possibility* of aversion in all directions and protect and maintain that, regardless of the circumstances or the people they encounter. Thus, it's about removing the possibility of aversion, not the possibility of meeting disagreeable and unpleasant people and experiences.

The choice to prioritise immediate circumstances over the mind of non-aversion is a choice to abandon the framework necessary for the development of *mettā*. By protecting and cherishing the general mindset like a mother would protect her child, as stated in the *Mettā sutta*, one will prevent actions that stem from a mind of aversion, and thus protect all living beings as well.

Also, it is essential to note that the development of *mettā* does not result in having *love* for all: it leads to

the development of *upekkhā*, or equanimity, which is the ability to maintain an unshakable mind toward all things without attachments.

Q: Love breeds infatuation, not equanimity.

Nm: Yes, and it also makes you susceptible to aversion, fear, and anxiety, because now you depend on it emotionally and existentially.

Q: So if you can't see the direct connection between *mettā* and *upekkhā*, your definition of *mettā* needs re-defining. And in terms of *karunā*, how can we get to that stage?

Nm: You just have to take the same principle of *mettā* a step further. Initially, when encountering something disagreeable, one may feel aversion towards it. Then, one can develop a mind of non-aversion towards the unpleasant, but there may still be some resistance. By further developing the mind of non-aversion, one begins to refine the *principle of non-resistance* that underlies all four *Brahmavihāra*. That non-resistance is the abandoning of craving, cruelty, and any conflict.

Q: Regarding whatever is felt, pleasant or unpleasant: if it's unpleasant, you should practise non-resistance. And if it's pleasant, you must not be trying to possess it?

Nm: People are inclined to pursue pleasant things because there is a simultaneous resistance to the pain of desire. The urge for pleasure stems from an aversion to one's current state. One resists even pleasure and desires to change it when it isn't sufficient (and it never is for one who craves it). Therefore, by cultivating *Brahmavihāra*, one can overcome sensuality too, which involves resistance.

Q: Maintaining a peaceful mind towards all *feelings* is the core practice.

Nm: Yes.

Q: With the *Brahmavihāra* practice, you cannot hurt anyone…

Nm: …because the intention to hurt, to engage in sensuality, or to be cruel, is always rooted in resisting whatever you are feeling at the time. Unwholesome actions require *resistance to feeling* as their necessary condition.

Q: Moreover, when individuals have established and stabilised their mind in *mettā* and *karunā,* a sense of contentment arises within them, irrespective of the feeling experienced. This contentment is known as *muditā*.

Then, a Bhikkhu might say thus: 'I have developed and cultivated the liberation of the mind by *muditā*, made it my vehicle and basis, carried it out, consolidated it, and properly undertaken it, yet discontent still obsesses my mind.'He should be told: 'Not so! Do not speak thus. Do not misrepresent the Blessed One; for it is not good to misrepresent the Blessed One. The Blessed One would certainly not speak in such a way. It is impossible and inconceivable, friend, that one might develop and cultivate the liberation of the mind by *muditā*, make it one's vehicle and basis, carry it out, consolidate it, and properly undertake it, yet discontent could still obsess one's mind. There is no such possibility. For this, friend is the escape from discontent, namely, the liberation of the mind by *muditā*. **– An6.13**

Nm: 'Altruistic joy,' which is the usual translation of muditā, is not accurate. Muditā stems from the principle we're discussing here of non-resistance and non-contention towards others and whatever circumstances arise; safeguarding your mind of benevolence, which harms no other being. The result is that the mind becomes imperturbable to any circumstance.

So as a sense of joy, it's similar to the joy you get in *jhana* – joy that you're secluded and unaffected, free of concern regarding the entire world. You can see how equanimity regarding good or bad is developed from that.

Q: Another description of *muditā* can be found in An 3.95:

And what is the harmonious assembly? Here, the assembly in which the bhikkhus dwell in concord, harmoniously, without disputes, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with eyes of affection, is called the harmonious assembly.

"When the bhikkhus dwell in concord, harmoniously, without disputes, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with eyes of affection, on that occasion, they generate much merit. On that occasion, the bhikkhus dwell in a divine abode, that is, in the liberation of the mind through muditā. When one is content, *pīti* (happiness) arises. For one with a happy mind, the body becomes calm. One calm in the body feels pleasure. For one feeling such pleasure, the mind becomes composed.

Nm: The best way to cultivate a friendly attitude towards all is to focus on maintaining your mind of friendliness and non-resistance towards how you feel, and then protect it as a mother protects her child. When you don't mind experiencing disagreeable feelings, it becomes inconceivable to hate the person who seemingly caused those feelings. You don't need to manage all your various individual relationships or circumstances if the *Brahmavihāra* framework is developed—quite the contrary.

You find that mental "gateway", through which other beings or circumstances have to arise and instead of chasing, managing, dealing with, or trying to prevent those circumstances, you realise, "All I need to do is protect the gateway and not lose sight of it". And you protect it by not acting out of it.

Q: Which results in peacefulness?

Nm: Peacefulness will come as a result of it, as a culmination of the absence of your resistance towards what you feel. Peace is not about *not* feeling pain. Peace is about not being disturbed by pain or being pulled by pleasures.

Q: Non-conflict.

Nm: Yes, non-conflict internally. Can you have a conflict with anybody externally without already being conflicted with what you're feeling internally? Impossible.

Trying to eliminate conflict from the external world is futile because the source of conflict is internal. It is by resolving your internal conflict that it becomes impossible for external events to disturb you, even if the whole world is conflicting with you.

Sutta Nipāta 1.8 *Metta Sutta*:

This is to be done by one skilled in his welfare

having fully understood the path of peace:

Let them be capable, honest and upright

Well-spoken, gentle and not boastful;

content and easy to support,

Living lightly, unbusy with duties,

Intelligent with calmed senses;

Not intrusive or greedy amongst families.

Let them not do the slightest thing

which others of wisdom would criticise.

Happy and secure,

may all beings be happy!

Whatever living creatures,

moving or unmoving, without leaving any out,

long or large, medium, short, coarse or subtle,
visible or invisible, living far or near,
those born or to be born:
May all beings be happy!

One should not deceive another, nor look
down upon anyone anywhere.
Out of anger and averse intention,
one should not wish suffering for another.

Even as a mother would protect her only
child with her life,
so too, in regard to all beings
should one protect an unlimited mind.

With benevolence (*mettā*) towards the entire world,
One should develop an unlimited mind.
Above, below, and all around,
unobstructed, friendly and without enemies.

Whether standing, walking, sitting
or lying down – while awake,
he would always remember this;
This, they say, is the way of the gods.

Being uninvolved in views,
Virtuous and accomplished with insight
Having dispelled greed for sensual pleasures,
He then never again returns to a womb.

The Danger Contemplation

– By Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

> And how, bhikkhus, are sensual pleasures seen by a bhikkhu in such a way that as he looks at them sensual desire, sensual affection, sensual infatuation, and sensual passion do not lie latent within him in regard to sensual pleasures?
>
> Suppose there is a charcoal pit deeper than a man's height, filled with glowing coals without flame or smoke. A man would come along wanting to live, not wanting to die, desiring happiness and averse to suffering. Then two strong men would grab him by both arms and drag

him towards the charcoal pit. The man would wriggle his body this way and that. For what reason? Because he knows: 'I will fall into this charcoal pit and I will thereby meet death or deadly suffering.' So too, bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu has seen sensual pleasures similar to a charcoal pit, sensual desire, sensual affection, sensual infatuation, and sensual passion do not lie latent within him in regard to sensual pleasures.

And how, bhikkhus, has a bhikkhu comprehended a mode of conduct and manner of living such that evil unwholesome states of covetousness and displeasure do not flow in upon him? Suppose a man would enter a thorny forest. There would be thorns in front of him, thorns behind him, thorns to his left, thorns to his right, thorns below him, thorns above him. He would go forward mindfully, he would go back mindfully, thinking, 'May no thorn prick me!' So too, bhikkhus, whatever in the world has a pleasing and agreeable nature is called a thorn in the Noble One's Discipline. Having understood this thus as 'a thorn', one should understand restraint and non-restraint. – Sn35.244

Ajahn Nyanamoli: In the context of the Noble Ones' discipline, where one possesses Right view and has comprehended the Four Noble Truths, it is crucial to regard every pleasure as a thorn. This means that, just as one must be careful when entering a jungle filled with thorns, one must exercise caution and attentiveness in approaching such experiences. However, the emphasis lies not on learning "how" to be cautious, but on cultivating the mindset of viewing pleasurable experiences as potential dangers. By adopting this perspective, vigilance and care will arise spontaneously, as one recognizes the potential harm that can arise from delighting in pleasure. It is imperative to note that this simile is not merely about physical caution, but about the mental attitude towards pleasure and the hazards it presents.

Merely imitating carefulness methodically is insufficient to fulfil the Noble discipline and attain Arahantship. One must learn to *view* pleasurable experiences as thorns to genuinely grasp restraint and lack of restraint. By adopting this mindset, certain perceptions develop that aid in overcoming sensual desires and attachments. Understanding the harm that pleasurable experiences pose leads to a natural sense of vigilance and mindfulness.

So, the effort one makes should not be directed towards being mindful of every physical movement or similar. Instead, one should strive to discern how to *perceive* sensuality as "burning embers" and thus turn the sense restraint into something effortless and preferable. This will be followed by dispassion and freedom from suffering and attachment. The task entails thorough and accurate reflection of recognizing the danger over and over again in things that would otherwise be the foundation for desire.

In the first simile, the mind of a Noble disciple seeks to be anywhere else in the world except in the burning pit. Similarly, when a pleasurable experience arises in the mind, if one has cultivated the perception of danger, one's mind will not want to go there. Even when it comes to eating, one should be attentive to how they perceive the food and ensure that they do not lose their understanding of sensuality as something perilous.

Q: Why am I unable to see the inherent danger in sensuality, even though it is a fact? What is preventing me from recognizing the danger that is present?

Nm: Although you can state that sensuality is dangerous, if you still have passion towards it, then you have not truly understood its danger. The measure of your understanding is whether or not you are dispassionate in the face of sensuality. So, simply stating abstract facts about the danger of sensuality is not enough, as it does not reflect your actual experience. Don't confuse abstract ideas for true understanding. For example, simply acknowledging the "fact" of impermanence of everything does not necessarily mean that you have any *understanding* of it. To truly understand *anicca*, you must develop it to the point of becoming a Sotapanna.

Engaging with sensuality multiple times a day, whether it be relishing, welcoming, planning, or worrying about it, is a clear symptom of not having understood the danger of sensuality. Thus, instead of taking it as a fact, contemplate the danger repeatedly for as long as it takes for the context of its danger to become established. And then protect the context by avoiding carelessness and indulging in sensual thoughts.

Q: How can one identify or become aware of the danger?

Nm: Some individuals recognize the danger of excessive indulgence in sensuality. They observe the discontent that arises from indulgence, which is why many turn to religion, spirituality, and meditation. The dissatisfaction is clear, and many people can perceive it. However, how one responds to it determines if they remain trapped within the same domain or if they free themselves from it..

For others, this might not be apparent at first, so they must take refuge in the Buddha's teachings and trust that sensuality is truly dangerous and unworthy of attachment, even if it contradicts their personal experiences. This requires a commitment to maintaining virtue and practising sense restraint when agreeable sensations arise in the body and mind. Trust in the teachings enables the mind to contemplate and discern the danger of sensuality, which may not be immediately apparent to its full extent.

By practising sense restraint and discerning the arising thoughts without immediately acting upon them, one can gain insight into the implications of sensuality and why it is not beneficial. Through diligent contemplation and clarification, doubts can be endured and overcome, and a deeper understanding of the danger of sensuality can be realised.

It should be understood that simply hearing about the dangers of sensuality is not enough. One must make a sincere effort to investigate and reflect upon their own experiences with sensuality in order to truly comprehend its harmful nature. Only then will the Buddha's similes regarding sensuality in the Suttas become clear and meaningful.

So, a genuine effort and personal investigation are necessary to truly comprehend and avoid the danger of sensuality. Mere provision of information without personal reflection and effort will not lead to understanding and seeing of the danger.

Q: This is the simile of the deer herd that you often refer to:

> Bhikkhus, a deer-trapper does not lay down bait for a deer herd intending thus: 'May the deer herd enjoy this bait that I have laid down and so be long-lived and handsome and endure for a long time.' A deer-trapper lays down bait for a deer herd intending thus: 'The deer herd will eat food unwarily by going right in amongst the bait that I have laid down; by so doing they will become intoxicated; when they are intoxicated, they will fall into negligence; when they are negligent, I can do with them as I like on account of this bait.- Mn25

Nm: It cannot be denied that there is a pleasant quality to indulging in the bait. However, it's a trap. If one truly comprehends this danger, the superficial allure of the bait will lose its power to arouse desire.

Q: The bait is not intended for our well-being. The traps are not set for our benefit.

Nm: As previously mentioned, it can be difficult to recognize the potential danger within sensuality when it presents itself in a beautiful and enticing manner. Our automatic response is to view it as friendly, non-threatening, and harmless. However, it's essential to challenge this perception and ask ourselves why we view it as such. What is the basis for our belief that pleasure of the senses is "natural" and harmless? Have we ever truly questioned it, or is it simply an assumption we've made without consideration?

If you fail to see sensuality as a problem, then no matter how much you study the Buddha's teachings, it will not make a difference. Sensuality is a problem because you are under its control. If you ignore this fact, you are like a prey caught in a trap, being dragged around by the hunter while pretending to be going where you want to go. Meanwhile, the hunter is there in your face, amused by your ignorance of the situation.

Sensuality, if it were wholesome, would not pressure you. It would not require the loss of self-awareness, or induce lust in your mind. Sensuality is deceptive and not what it appears to be. This is why the Buddha often compared it to a trap.

Q:

> "Now the deer of the first herd ate food unwarily by going right in amongst the bait that the deer-trapper had laid down; by so doing they became intoxicated; when they were intoxicated, they fell into negligence; when they were negligent, the deer-trapper did with them as he liked

on account of that bait. That is how the deer of the first herd failed to get free from the deer trapper's power and control."

Nm: They act impulsively and indulge in their desires, without any consideration for the consequences or impact on themselves or others. This is common behaviour.

Q:

"Now the deer of a second herd reckoned thus: 'The deer of that first herd, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. Suppose we altogether shun that bait food; shunning that fearful enjoyment, let us go out into the forest wilds and live there.' And they did so. But in the last month of the hot season when the grass and the water were used up, their bodies were reduced to extreme emaciation; with that they lost their strength and energy; when they had lost their strength and energy, they returned to that same bait that the deer-trapper had laid down. They ate food unwarily by going right in amongst it. By doing so they became intoxicated; when they were intoxicated they fell into negligence; when they were negligent, the deer-trapper did with them as he liked on account of that bait. And that is how the deer of the second herd also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control."

Nm: This second type of individuals, even without the guidance of the Buddha's teaching, can still experience the dissatisfaction and suffering caused by sensual desires and have enough intelligence to recognize it. One doesn't need to be a Buddhist to understand that these desires are temporary, can only be appeased but never satisfied and they control one's life. Many people realise this and question the purpose of pursuing these desires. Some of them choose to shun the bait, i.e. avoid engaging with anything pleasing to the senses, such as beautiful sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches. However, they fail to understand the root of the problem – the attachment and craving in their minds – and mistake the objects of pleasure as the source of the problem. Thus, they become ascetics who deny any object that *could* be pleasing to the senses. They think that by doing so, they can escape the suffering caused by their own desires.

However, the problem with this approach is that pleasure or displeasure is not determined by the objects themselves, but by one's state of mind. Even if one lives on top of a mountain, the mind can still crave for pleasure and find it in things that were previously unpleasant. Therefore, one cannot sustain the practice of not engaging with sense objects forever. Sooner or later, one will encounter something pleasing, and if one hasn't understood the root of desire, one will be trapped by that.

This is similar to the second deer herd, which avoids the bait but eventually returns to it when food becomes scarce in the mountains. When they encounter the bait again, they get trapped because they haven't developed the wisdom to recognize where the *actual* trap is. They only know how to run away from the bait, but not how to avoid discerning it from the trap.

Doubling down on asceticism or creating elaborate ways to avoid temptation, as the Jains did, will not solve the issue; as the root of sensuality is not in the objects themselves, but rather in one's craving. The Buddha himself tried extreme asceticism to the point of refusing to breathe or eat, but it did not free him from sensuality. He realized that pain, and self-torture, were not the ways to enlightenment.

Therefore, one should certainly exercise restraint and virtuous behaviour; but then when thoughts of sensuality arise, it is important to realise that not only should one not give into them, but neither should one simply try to get rid of them. This is akin to avoiding thinking about a trap without understanding how one is trapped. It is through enduring these thoughts and understanding the pressure that drives them that one can truly see its actual nature and overcome sensuality. The Buddha emphasised that sensuality is not rooted in the beautiful objects of the world, but rather in the desire and lust that surrounds them. An Arahant or Tathagata who has removed desire and lust from their thoughts can still perceive the beautiful objects without being driven by lust.

Q:

"Now the deer of a third herd reckoned thus: 'The deer of that first herd, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. The deer of

> that second herd, by reckoning how the deer of the first herd had failed and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of going to live in the forest wilds, also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. Suppose we make our dwelling place within range of the deer-trapper's bait. Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going right in amongst the bait that the deer-trapper has laid down; by doing so we shall not become intoxicated; when we are not intoxicated, we shall not fall into negligence; when we are not negligent, the deer-trapper shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.' And they did so."But then the deer-trapper and his following considered thus: 'These deer of this third herd are as cunning and crafty as wizards and sorcerers. They eat the bait laid down without our knowing how they come and go. Suppose we have the bait that is laid down completely surrounded all round over a wide area with wicker hurdles; then perhaps we might see the third deer herd's dwelling place, where they go to hide.' They did so, and they saw the third herd's dwelling place, where they went to hide. And that is how the deer of the third herd also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control."

Nm: This third deer herd is just like contemplatives who have renounced indulgence in external sense objects and extreme ascetic practices but have not abandoned their internal thirst for pleasure: they act under the pressure of their views in which they find pleasure. Although they may physically restrain themselves from indulging in sensual pleasures, they still mentally entertain the same value of pleasing objects and thirst for them. They may plan how to avoid displeasing sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, build their own little palace, and avoid experiencing any hardship or elements. All of these thoughts and actions show that they are still concerned about catering to their senses for pleasure. Therefore, Mara, the trapper, may still catch them because they left all the footprints around the bait.

The Buddha compares this to holding views or opinions that one feels blindly justified about. Views can be anything from how monks should wear their robes to what should be done or how one should behave. It is not a choice to hold views, but it is a choice *what* views to hold and how to hold them. If one feels ill will or irritation when someone disagrees with their views, they are still holding onto views wrongly, even if they are based on Dhamma.

A person holds the views "wrongly" through an emotional state that underlies them. If one holds any view and feels emotionally disturbed when someone challenges it, they are wrong to that extent. Even if the view is accurate in and of itself. This means they have not removed the passion internally and are not free from sensuality.

The problem lies in whether one is emotionally attached to one's opinion or not. So, instead of trying to rid oneself of views, one should learn not to be moved by them. This way, one can objectively assess whether their views are right or wrong without feeling existentially threatened by opposing opinions. It is crucial to abandon wrong views and be fearless in exploring and pushing in the very direction that one has been afraid of. If one is upset by worldly views, how much more emotional distress will they feel when they start undermining their very personal existential views?

Any emotional attachment to a view, whether it is right or wrong, is unjustifiable. If one finds oneself getting upset due to someone else's opinions or remarks, *that* makes them wrong. It does not matter if the other person is foolish; it is irrelevant from a standpoint of the Dhamma practice. Emotional involvement with any opinion or standpoint is a sign of being wrong.

By not being emotionally invested in our views and standpoints, we can avoid falling into the trap and thus become the fourth type of herd. The Buddha had views and opinions on many things, but he did not have passion underlying any of them. This is what we can strive for as well – to have views and opinions but not be moved by them emotionally.

Q:

> "Now the deer of a fourth herd reckoned thus: 'The deer of that first herd, by acting as they did without precaution, failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. The deer of that second herd, by reckoning how the deer of the first herd had failed and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of going to live in the forest wilds, also failed to get free from the

> deer-trapper's power and control. And the deer of that third herd, by reckoning how the deer of the first herd and also the deer of the second herd had failed, and by planning and acting as they did with the precaution of making their dwelling place within range of the deer-trapper's bait, also failed to get free from the deer-trapper's power and control. Suppose we make our dwelling place where the deer-trapper and his following cannot go. Then, having done so, we shall eat food not unwarily and without going right in amongst the bait that the deer-trapper has laid down; by doing so we shall not become intoxicated; when we are not intoxicated, we shall not fall into negligence; when we are not negligent, the deer-trapper shall not do with us as he likes on account of that bait.' And they did so."But then the deer-trapper and his following considered thus: 'These deer of this fourth herd are as cunning and crafty as wizards and sorcerers. They eat the bait laid down without our knowing how they come and go. Suppose we have the bait that is laid down completely surrounded all round over a wide area with wicker hurdles; then perhaps we might see the fourth deer herd's dwelling place, where they go to hide.' They did so, but they did not see the fourth deer herd's dwelling place, where they went to hide. Then the deer-hunter and his following considered thus: 'If we scare the fourth deer herd, being scared they will alert others, and so the deer herds will all desert this bait that we have laid down. Suppose we treat the fourth deer herd with indifference.' They did so. And that was how the deer of the fourth deer herd got free from the deer-trapper's power and control."

Nm: Individuals who are like the fourth type of deer herd do not accept any external justification for their standpoints, which allows them to become both externally and internally calmed. They do not act out of craving and instead develop *jhana*, which is a place where Mara cannot find them.

Peripheral Awareness

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Mindfulness done correctly is when the mind is **anchored** in something. That something must be a thing that is not directly attended to, but instead, has to be a **reference point** to the attended thing (hence we call it "anchor"). If a thing is not directly attended to but there, we call that thing to be a "background". It's a background to a thing we attend (which makes that thing a "foreground"). This is the basic principle of mindfulness, on which we can expand here below.

One begins developing this practice of awareness by being mindful of the experience as a **whole**. For example, one is mindful of 'being-seated-on-a-chair-reading-a-Dhamma-essay'. That is one's **situation** at that very time. That is one's experience as a "whole". This is always the necessary starting point. What is very important is to prevent the tendency to become absorbed in one particular thing. (Feeling, sensations or perception, and similar). Instead, one has to broaden the mindfulness and become aware of the **generality** of one's current situation, without losing the sight of the particular either.[1]

Of course, the attempts of discerning the background of one's current experience will not be perfect in the beginning. One will more often than not fall into a mistake of over-attending one's experience as a whole. This is a mistake of making that background into an **object** of one's attention, defining it, clarifying it, trying to keep it in front. These are all ways of making it a **foreground,** which means that then something else will be in place of the background.

The natural tendency is to ask "**What** is then the background?". This is however a wrong question. And it's wrong because we are not concerned with the **content** of the background (or foreground for that matter), which would be the answer to "what?". Instead our concern should be with **nature** of it. So one needs to restrain the tendency to clarify **what** is that "background", and learn how to start discerning the **domain** of it. The domain of the "**periphery**", its nature, in regard to **what** is presently **enduring** here.

[1]This is why the correct practice of mindfulness results in higher establishments of mind (*samadhi*). For example, this is where mind surmounts the fundamental "generality" of form, by the way of surmounting the generality of earth, water, fire and air. Also, there is a reason that the order of elements always stays the same. They are have a particular structural order of their generality. And one can discern them in that order only.

Thus, something one attends to directly is what a foreground is at the time. It can be anything that is the current object of one's attention. That thing has manifested, and it is enduring as such. That's the basic structural property of one's experience, there is no problem with this. However, if one wants to develop mindfulness, a step further is necessary. That step is developing the peripheral "vision" in regard to that very same foreground object, but **without** making that peripheral vision the new object by **directly** attending to it. The Buddha referred to this as "**yoniso manasikara**", which is often translated as "proper attention". **Yoniso manasikara** is the correct way of attending to the peripheral. **Manasikara** means "attention". **Yoni** means "womb". So when a thing is present in the front, in the foreground, its peripheral background is that very "womb" the thing has "came from", so to speak. **Yoniso manasikara** is womb-attention, or less literally: a peripheral attention.[2]

Thus, the point is to learn **how** to attend. Not so much "what". It's about discerning the habit of "over-attending" and learning how to not resort to it. This habit manifests through either indulging or resisting the object of one's attention. Either way, one is fully concerned with it. This is why one must stop trying to "observe" one's experience as an object of one's attention and instead, acknowledge it and let it **endure** on its own. (Let it persist or change-while-remaining-the-same-thing). Once the arisen experience of one's attention is allowed to **be**, then gradually and **indirectly**, discerning of the peripheral **domain** can manifest.

The most practical way of practising this is through mindfulness of body postures. That's why these things are often called "foundations" of mindfulness, or "anchors" or "reference points". It's because they are **always** rooted in the **background.** (E.g. foundations are **under;** an anchor is at the **bottom**; the reference point is at the **distance.** Under, bottom, away… it means 'not-here-directly-in-front-of-me'). So for example: while I'm seated, I'm reading an article, actively scrolling through the pages, paying attention to what's being said in it. Things I'm "doing", like reading, writing, talking, etc. are things I'm attending to (foreground). And I'm attending to them all **while** I'm **seated**. That's the reference point that is enough for proper mindfulness. That is what's the background here. Yet, if I switch my attention and start attending to the fact that I'm sitting on the chair, then the body posture of "sitting" ceases to be the background in my experience. Why? Because I've broken the relationship of "referencing". There is no more "**while**", since I forgot about the reading, and became concerned with sitting. When this happens, one can either go back to the original foreground, or discern the newly present background in regard to the attended experience of sitting. The new background will have to be something even more **general** than "sitting posture". And the more general thing in that case is nothing other than awareness of the "body there".[3]

Body postures are more general than attending to a particular action or perception. But having a "body **there**" is even more general than the postures. Because to be walking, sitting, standing or lying down, one needs to have a **body** in the first place. That's why one can also use the knowledge of "there is body", as the peripheral anchor for one's daily actions and experiences. The presence of one's living body is a fundamental requirement for **any** action. We can go even higher (even more general), as we mentioned earlier, and develop awareness of the phenomenon of Earth, Water, Fire or Air. Or even further, in the practice of more refined **kasinas,** as described in the **Suttas**. The point is that the principle remains the same.

We need to stress that this is something that requires **development**. It's not something that can be just "figured out", or read once and made sense of. It requires a diligent **repetition** of "stepping back" when over-attending one's experience as a whole. And then "stepping in" when ignoring it (under-attending it, forgetting about the background). So, it takes time and effort in order for it to be correctly **discerned** and **recognized**.

The problem with common practice of meditation is that people are encouraged to get "absorbed" into the particular "meditation object". The practice becomes a form of focusing on the foreground at the expense of everything else. And not just that, people end up focusing on the objects twice as hard. This is because their view of meditation is to look and **perceive** the "momentary" foreground (the whole idea of "observing

[2]That's also why this type of attention is said by the Buddha to be one of the necessary pre-requisites for the arising of the Right view.

[3]"…or mindfulness that"there is body" is simply established in him to the extent necessary for the final knowledge." – MN 10, *Satipatthana Sutta*.

'sensations'") . Then **within** that they try to perceive even **more particular** things. So it's not just the **domain** of the foreground, but the content proliferates further too. In cases like this, the 'background', as a foundation of mindfulness that needs to be understood, is even further obscured.

The 'reference point' means being aware of something, without having to **actively** think about it. That's the basic principle of mindfulness. This should **always** be the basis for **samadhi** (according to the **Suttas**).[4] That is why, if mindfulness and awareness is practised correctly, it will result in **knowledge** of the nature of things. The very definition of knowledge is knowing something without having to actively think about it. The knowledge reappears when it is attended to. One knows what one knows. This is the important point because this type of mindfulness of the background that's simultaneous with the presently arisen phenomenon[5], results in the establishment of mind (**samadhi**) that transcends **sensuality** and **ill will.** The whole **domain** (scope) of unwholesome.[6] And that's why that **samadhi** further results in complete knowledge of liberation.

The catch is in persistent effort of repetition of **learning** how to **attend** to things **peripherally,** without having to "directly" look at them. For a mind affected with **avijja**, the "direct look", the "**ayoniso manasikara**" always involves **appropriation** and the **Self-view**. And "learning to attend" things peripherally can be done on many different "bases" or "domains" that are structurally present as the background of our attended experience. These domains are the domain of feelings, thoughts, and even one's intentions (bodily, verbal and mental).

For example, being aware of the **general feeling** present, without trying to **perceive** it as "sensation" (i.e. "in" the body), is another way of establishing the proper mindfulness.

Or, something we often talk about, taking up of personal **responsibility**. If one takes it up, then no matter what the engagement with the particular task is, the background of it (the "womb" of that engagement) is one's own **choice** to engage with it in the first place. Taking up responsibility, means becoming aware of the "background" choices one makes throughout one's life.[7]

Furthermore, taking up responsibility for what one has chosen, a person gets to maintain that mindfulness through the very particular actions one is doing on account of it. And that mindfulness of responsibility is not something they would have to perpetually think about. No, that mindfulness is being **felt** instead. (That's why the initial awareness of **any** form of responsibility is always **unpleasant** and concerning).

The choice behind one's actions is a general **unity**, a **context** of one's acts, that is present in each of those acts individually. Present as a peripheral background. It is because of this that **sila** or **virtue** is a necessary prerequisite for understanding. When one's actions are based on **distortions** of priority (particular sensuality **over** general nature of choice regarding it, for example), one cannot see a clear responsible background while engaged in such pursuits. No perspective, so to speak. So, first actions that maintain absorptions with particularity must be divorced from the unwholesome domain. Then they must be further restrained, by avoiding the distracting of oneself. By undoing wrong way of attending to things. By not cultivating improper attention. Only then can one begin to discern **the signs** of the peripheral, characteristics of the background hereby discussed. Only then one will be able to "grasp the sign of one's mind" or **cittanimitta.** A necessary requirement for the arising of the Right view.

by

Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

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[4] "Unification of mind, friend Visakha, is samadhi. The four foundations of mindfulness are the basis of samadhi. The four right kind of striving are the equipment of samadhi. The repetition, the development and cultivation of those same states is what development of samadhi is." – MN 44, *Culavedalla Sutta*.

[5] Experience as a whole, the 'foreground-without-focusing-on-particular-object-witin-it'.

[6] Sensuality is *always* concerned with the particular content of the experience. Particular *sight, sound, smell, taste, touch*. Thus, mindfulness of the peripheral domain to the particular foreground, can result in overcoming it.

[7] Hence the fully developed knowledge that came from the Right View, results in freeing an individual from his actions (*kamma*). Full understanding of the nature of the "choice" as "peripheral", removes the gratuitous *assumption (upadana)* of necessity of the "Chooser" i.e. the Self. Understanding the choice or intentional intention (*cetana*) frees oneself from choosing (i.e. acting).

The Necessity of Celibacy

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Practice of celibacy is always beneficial. Even for a lay person, who is not necessarily Buddhist or familiar with the Dhamma. The obvious reason for its benefits is the inevitable increase of the mental strength that comes with the restraint. This restraint is *intentional* and aims at a very powerful desire that otherwise shapes and controls one's whole life. Sensuality / sexuality is something that heavily contributes towards defining one's actions and choices. It is something that has at least some influence in virtually all of them.

Thus, adopting a practice of restraint of the sensual desire, a person will be going against that grain of the natural sexual pull of one's own body. Through willingly imposing this restraint, the mind will be pressured to grow – in terms of strength and in terms of enduring of itself. (As the case with any strength development is. Gradually increasing resistance, increases the capacity to hold the very same.)

Sometimes people think that not having sexual intercourse is all that being celibate means. That doesn't constitute the celibacy we are talking about here. The difference is to not be celibate *only* because the current circumstances are presenting no options, but to actually be celibate as a result of *determination* and *practice of restraint*. (And then one might decide to live in the circumstance that present no options, and that's fine.) It's important to not misunderstand this. We are not saying that one somehow needs to be *tempting* oneself with sensuality. "Flirting" with it, so to speak, to keep reinforcing the practice of saying "no" to it. That's ridiculous. And completely misguided and countering the right efforts. Flirting with sensuality can only be done out of *sensuality*. (As the Buddha said, it's not possible to have sensual perception without the mind being bound by sensuality.) So, tempting oneself with sensuality, it's already a form of engaging *with* sensuality. As such, it goes against the practice of the celibate determinations.

> "Firstly, a man who claims to be perfectly celibate does not mutually engage in sex with a woman. However, they consent to being anointed, massaged, bathed, and rubbed by a woman. They enjoy it and like it and find it satisfying. This is a corruption, flaw, blemish, or taint in celibacy. This is called one who lives the celibate life impurely, tied to the fetter of sex. They're not freed from rebirth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress. They're not freed from suffering, I say.
>
> Furthermore, a man who claims to be perfectly celibate does not mutually engage in sex with a woman. Nor do they consent to massage and bathing. However, they laugh and play and have fun with women.
>
> they gaze into a woman's eyes;
>
> they listen through a wall or rampart to the sound of women laughing or chatting or singing or crying.
>
> they recall when they used to laugh, chat, and have fun with women;
>
> they see a householder or their child amusing themselves, supplied and provided with the five kinds of sensual pleasures;
>
> They don't see a householder or their child amusing themselves, supplied and provided with the five kinds of sensual pleasures. However, they live the celibate life wishing to be reborn in one of the orders of gods. They think: 'By this precept or observance or mortification or spiritual life, may I become one of the gods!' They enjoy it and like it and find it satisfying. This is a corruption, flaw, blemish, or taint in celibacy. This is called one who lives the celibate life impurely, tied to the fetter of sex. They're not free from rebirth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, sadness, and distress. They're not free from suffering, I say.
>
> As long as I saw that these seven sexual fetters—or even one of them—had not been given up in me, I didn't announce my supreme perfect awakening in this world with its gods, Maras and Brahmas, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans.

> But when I saw that these seven sexual fetters—every one of them—had been given up in me, I announced my supreme perfect awakening in this world with its gods, Maras and Brahmas, this population with its ascetics and brahmins, its gods and humans. Knowledge and vision arose in me: 'My freedom is unshakable; this is my last rebirth; now there are no more future lives.' "
> – Anguttara Nikaya, 7.50

So, it's this determination, the decision to not engage with sensuality ever again that makes all the difference. Just like when a person is trying to give up smoking for example. It will be much harder to do so if you bring yourself up to decide to *never* smoke again, as opposed to deciding it to quit it half-heartedly for a month or so. The former would exert much more pressure on an individual and even someone who was not a heavy, but a casual, smoker would feel the whole weight of it. And this is even more true of celibacy. And it is necessary to determine it in such a decisive manner.

Only then the mind will be pushed towards development (provided it doesn't break) of strength on that corresponding level. Anything short of it, the mind will just tread water until the pressure of sexuality builds up, and then inevitably give in. Determining it decisively, however, means that person's entire life will have to be affected by the profound shift in significance of ordinary things in day to day life. This is pretty much the main reason why most of the people would be afraid of doing it.

As hard as it might seem, it is still very much possible to succeed with a persistent effort over a period of time. If one modifies one's environment to support the restraint and to not add more to the already existing pressure, the mind can eventually become dry of the inherent "wetness" of the desires. Then everything in person's life that was depending on the acts of sensuality and non-restraint, will also "dry out". A person would be free from it. This refers to the inherent worries of protecting what one has acquired, pains of craving towards what one doesn't have yet, obstacles of one's worldly ambitions, and similar. All these things will have no significance any more. They will not be able to cause one to suffer on account of them.

It is also important to mention that the *sooner* one starts this practice the better. It is not uncommon for people to think that they have time to get older and pursue sexual and sensual desires. And that then afterwards, they can practice restraint and free themselves from desires. Unfortunately, it's quite the opposite: the longer one waits the harder it will be to *discern* sensuality and do something about it. With old age, sexuality goes "underground" so to speak. The time comes when the body loses its vigour and the sexuality won't manifest any more in a form of obvious physical behaviour and thirst. This can mislead a person to believe that they are free from it. What actually happened was that sexuality has now descended from something that was discernible (bodily actions and thoughts of such) to something that's virtually invisible. A subtle *background* that becomes a ubiquitous motivation for all sorts of habits, acts and even psychological needs. They wouldn't carry the sensual flavour to them anymore. A flavour that used to be very clear on the surface of them at all. If the mind hasn't made the effort, while the aim of the effort was obvious, it won't be able to do it now. Of course, it is still possible in theory at least. But, when the strength and determination fade with the body, having been left undeveloped for so long, it is very unlikely that that will change. (The Suttas, though, do list few exceptions of very old people reaching arahantship. But those were rare, which is why they were so clearly remembered.)

Thus, the sooner the better. That's also why many people in time of the Buddha were inspired to see young monks and nuns in *prime* of their life. Meaning: they were at the time of their lives when sensuality was still available and easy to get. They have not just given it up, but ended up *enjoying* the practise of restraint and understanding the Dhamma.

> "Then that devata said to the Venerable Samiddhi:"You have gone forth while young, bhikkhu, a lad with black hair, endowed with the blessing of youth and strength, in the prime of life, without having dallied with sensual pleasures. Enjoy human sensual pleasures, bhikkhu; do not abandon what is directly visible in order to pursue what takes time."
>
> "I have not abandoned what is directly visible, friend, in order to pursue what takes time. I have abandoned what takes time in order to pursue what is directly visible. For the Blessed One, friend, has stated that sensual pleasures are time-consuming, full of suffering, full of despair, and the danger in them is still greater, while this Dhamma is directly visible, immediate, inviting one

to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise." — SN 1.20

We must stress here that practice of sense restraint would be beneficial even to those who have no interest in practising the Dhamma – fully or partially. Because if the mind manages to become stronger than the sensual pull, and learns how to go beyond sensual cravings, it will to a great degree go beyond the burdens that come with the sensuality. Burdens that are otherwise unavoidable and bring much worry and suffering. Going beyond sensuality will also lessen the grip of one's own Ego and all the conceit underlying it would be reduced. The anxieties, lack of satisfaction, guilt over things done in the past – all of that would disappear or be significantly removed. Of course, we can only imagine what greater freedom can be gained, if on top of the steadfast restraint, one also practices the Dhamma instructions towards uprooting even the subtle conceit and cravings.

The entire life of a person most often revolves around following desires. Trying to get what one wants is the most fundamental habit of a human mind. This is quite normal, but the problem is in that *what* people want is almost always rooted in sensuality. One's desires are most often aimed at the pursuit of the pleasures gained through physical senses. Pleasant sights, sounds, tastes, smells and touches. Subtle or coarse. If a man begins to learn how to go against this *sensual "grain"* that exhorts pressure on him, that will already mean a beginning of strength. Of course, mere resistance to such sensual cravings will not be able to uproot the sensuality in itself. For that, *understanding* of the nature of that sensuality will be necessary. But this is only possible on the *basis* of the sense restraint. For example, if a person has been adhering to the practice of restraint and abstaining from *intentionally* giving in to sense desires, that person will be able to see the gratuitous nature of the sensual desire in a form of one's own thoughts. It is something that has arisen completely uninvited, yet pressures one to act upon it as if it is truly owned by him. Sticking to this kind of reflection can reveal that even things that one does want and desire, are rooted and arisen as something that is fundamentally outside of one's control. One's responsibility lies not in preventing those thoughts from arising, but in choosing to *delight* and *entertain* them. Or not, as the Buddha would tell. In brief: being able to see the uncontrollable (gratuitous) nature of one's own desires, one can overcome the pressure that they exhort on him.

The main reason why most people wouldn't even consider the practice of celibacy is because it's simply too difficult. Because of that it is also unlikely that a man would choose to do it, outside of some sort of philosophical belief or a religious practice. There just wouldn't be enough motivation.

To reiterate: freedom from sensuality starts by giving it up first. Saying "no" to it. That is not optional. This initial effort can then enable a person to allow the nature of desire to *manifest* and *arise*. As opposed to someone who tries to prevent this, or rather cover it up. This cover up is due to instantaneous giving in to the pressure of desire (if not physically, at least mentally). Or it is due to trying to prevent it and deny it. (The former and the latter correspond to sensual indulgence and self-mortification respectively.)

Giving in to the pressure, distracts one from seeing what is it that pressures him in the first place. Denying it, does the same. If one *learns* how to endure it through restraint, then it can become clear that there is no pressure of sensuality *without* one's body. A person at a face value regards one's own body as basis for pleasure. It's seen to be something "free" and "effortless". Something that belongs to "me". That in itself is a sufficient reason for giving in to it. Hence, it's not incidental that the Buddha often compared sensuality to a "bait".

If one contemplates the necessity of the living healthy body for *any* sensual engagements (fleeting or otherwise), it can be discerned that even the pleasures that one can gain from it *belong* to the actual *sense organs*. As in: pleasures are inseparable and inconceivable without them. Thus, if one wants to overcome the entire domain of sensuality, one can do so by overcoming the *ownership* of the sense organs (or the *body* as a whole). And extinguishing of the ownership, i.e. the necessary condition of sensuality, is done by understanding that it was impossible to own the body in the first place. If that were not so, then one's desires would *already* be all satisfied (i.e. there would be no desires to begin with). Alternatively, one can contemplate that if one were the true master and owner of one's own body, that body would not be a *subject* to illness, aging and death. It would not be *liable* to accidents, elements, circumstances, etc. This kind of understanding can only be properly developed on the basis of restraint and celibacy. And once it is developed, then the restraint will become a normal mode of behaviour. It will not be a way of "resistance" to the sensual pull any more,

because there will be no more senses that can pull one. Senses and their respective desires are a problem only when they are "mine".

by Ajhan Nyanamoli Thero

Intentions behind one's actions

The Right meditation is inseparable from the Right view. That means that even if a person doesn't have the Right view, their meditation should be concerned about getting it. To put it simply – it comes down to developing the self-transparency (or self-honesty) concerning skilful as skilful (*kusala*) and unskilful as unskilful (*akusala*). The Buddha defined the Right view in those very terms – knowing "good as good", and "bad as bad". The person with the Right view knows for oneself, beyond any doubt, *kusala* as *kusala* and *akusala* as *akusala*. By seeing it – he recognizes it. He doesn't need to hold or adopt any other external criteria. The clarity of his vision pertains to here and now, internally. Thus, for someone who hasn't achieved that yet, that's where the meditation should start. Obtaining of the Right criteria and then meditating through it. Keeping it "composed" is the definition of the Right *samadhi*.

The problem is that this kind of instruction is very non-specific. People today usually need something more proliferated and palpable. They require meditation "methods". An average man today wants a "recipe", a prescription of "steps". He needs to know what *exactly* he should *do*, that would then automatically result in his liberation. Unfortunately, it doesn't work like that. If we look at the Suttas, whenever the Buddha was talking about meditation it was to bring the fulfilment of knowledge and wisdom. Yet, if a person has none of the latter to begin with, then the fulfilment cannot arise nor be fabricated mechanically. Very often the Buddha's reply on how to meditate would be in instructing people in recognizing and avoiding the unskilful, and cultivating (*bhavana*) of the skilful. Discerning the nature of *kusala* and *akusala* has the potential of taking the mind above both. Freeing it from action (*kamma*) and it's results (*vipaka*), since they are bound to the domain of skilful and unskilful. And that's exactly why performing (*doing* or *acting*) of the specific steps, cannot take one *beyond* the nature of *kamma.* Understanding it however, might.

Furthermore, methods and techniques usually don't amount to more than management of the problem of suffering. Management of something cannot actually uproot that very thing. So, instead of that, a person will be better of in trying to discern what kind of attitude towards meditation can be sustained throughout the day. An attitude that wouldn't need any particular favorable environment or special conditions to be applied in. Regardless of whether one is sitting in a full lotus posture, or just walking down the street. One needs to find that kind of *composure* that one can maintain in both circumstances. The way to do this is if the composure is established upon the *general mindfulness.* Not the particular observation and adherence to the prescribed steps of a "meditation" technique, that results in one being *absorbed in it.* Absorption is the opposite of general mindfulness.

Every *jhana* for example is fully founded upon the basis of the unshakeable mindfulness as number of Suttas often mention. So, even if a person wants to do his meditation in a "formal" manner, such as sit for an hour few times a day, that is fine. As long as it is not done for the purpose of developing some sort of "experience of absoption" out of it. Like trying to watch one's breath hoping for some novelty energy release. The point of meditation is to remain *present* as much as possible. Present or mindful of *whatever* is ***already there*** (feelings, perceptions, intentions). Not interfere with it, or deny it, or try to replace it. Just discerning the enduring presence of the arisen experience. Emotionally, perceptually and intentionally. That kind of composure can then be "spread out" over one's entire day, even when a person is not sitting down to meditate.

And this should not be too hard to grasp (though that doesn't mean it will be easy to accept). The whole point of the practice of Dhamma and meditation is nothing other than understanding of the nature of things. The understanding that arises on account of mindful discerning of whatever is *arisen* and *enduring* in our experience. And it's that understanding of the unskilful that frees the mind from it. If a person wants to be truly free once and for all, the only way to do so is through the knowledge and mindfulness.

Thus, if one wants to practice in a manner that pertains to this final goal of freedom, he needs to become very mindful and honest about intentionality behind any actions. Simple actions, more complex ones, careless or important, big or small – actions of any kind done by body, speech or mind. One will need to attend to them mindfully until the motivation and intentions behind is fully seen. That is because it is the intention that defines wholesome action as wholesome and unwholesome as unwholesome. The "reason" for one's action so to speak. That's where skilfulness of an action is rooted at. That's also the *real* "reason", the one deep inside that one might not be willing to admit to oneself. If a person is able to reach the full transparency of one's intentional actions and its roots, that person is a step closer in discerning what makes *kusala* as *kusala* and *akusala* as *akusala*. That person is a step closer to the beginning of the Right criteria or view.

So, if one needs to meditate, one needs to be concerned with one's actions and choices. (Which is also why *sila* or virtue comes before the Dhamma). In such manner any motivation for one's intentions behind doing this or that will reveal and not taken at its face value. Through this persistent self-questioning one can also see whether an action that is about to be, is rooted in an unskilful motive. Like sensuality, ill will, vanity or distraction for example. Furthermore, one would need to abandon only *that*. The unwholesome. One doesn't need to cancel the entire arisen experience and behaviour. That would be a form of overdoing it, and not using mindfulness as a criteria of discernment. "Is what I am about to do rooted in greed? Lust? How about ill-will and annoyance or anger?" Or "am I acting out of a desire for distraction and forgetfulness? Am I willingly giving in to acts and desires that would delude me further and mask the unskilful basis of those very actions?" Such questioning about the personal and inner dimension of one's daily experiences and actions will *have to* result in being mindful. This is a definition of (proper) *vipassana* or investigation, since that's exactly what's being done. Self investigating the motivation behind any actions. And it is obvious to see how this kind of attitude and mindful practice would result in discerning "good as good, bad as bad". How it would not be dependent on any external authority or belief. Instead be a direct, visible, universal criteria seen personally for oneself.

It's important to note it is not necessary that one becomes neurotic or obsessed (though it might happen) about it. Always having to *actually* ask oneself "what am I doing?" before every action. What's important is the *attitude* of such *questioning*. The "answer" is already implied within it. One already *knows* why one is acting. Whether one is aware of it or not, that's a different matter. Of course, until that attitude is developed and refined, a person will have to endure possible loss of (superficial) confidence and choice paralysis. That's because the implications of one's smallest actions are becoming more revealed. A person starts to feel responsible even for things that are not in his control.

So through this kind of "revealing" of the roots of one's actions, one is simultaneously becoming less and less able to ignore one's true intentions. One will not be able to turn a blind eye towards acting good while the real motivation underneath it isn't necessarily so. That's why this attitude is "self-transparent". Whatever is on the surface, one simultaneously sees beneath it *as well*.

Consequently, one will be able to also see if something is genuinely not rooted in greed, aversion or delusion. In such case even if the whole world comes to tell him that that's still "bad", his discernment would remain unshaken. As mentioned above, that's because good and bad are defined by the intention behind them. Not by the common tradition, views and opinions, duty and culture, but by whether greed, aversion and delusion underlies them.

It should be clear by now that the self-honesty or transparency is not an optional thing (or just one of different ways leading to the same goal). It's an absolute pre-requisite for any chance of getting the Right view and knowing how to practice the Dhamma. If a person still has difficulties in abandoning own dependence upon a particular "method" of practice, they can still take up this practice of self-questioning all the time, as a "method". Although not ideal, it will still result in seeing through the motivation and emotional need for any methods in the first place. (Needing "something to do".) By seeing the subtle motivation under *any* action, one will automatically feel responsible for one's choices. No matter how "justified" those might seem externally. The weight on it is always on oneself, and that's something that one cannot ignore any further.

It is also then when the full weight of the Buddha's "beings are owners of one's actions" saying, is truly felt.

by Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

Breathing Towards Death

Practising the mindfulness of breathing correctly, means practising the mindfulness of death correctly.

The Buddha has offered mindfulness of breathing as a replacement for the practice of mindfulness of death. That was because mindfulness of death pushed some monks over the edge, so to speak. It made them wish for ending of their life before being fully awakened. Yet, it is important to note that mindfulness of breath aims at the *same* result as mindfulness of death does. That result is dispassion towards the world and life (of sensuality) in general. The mindfulness of breathing was a direct response to the need for rapid dispassion of those committed to its practice. This of course doesn't mean that mindfulness of death was wrong, but it means that mindfulness of breath is simply less risky. It cannot be stressed enough though – they both aim at the same result.

Furthermore, this applies for any other "meditation" that we find in Suttas. They might sound very different, but their aim is the same: the establishment of mindfulness. Mindfulness to the extent necessary for the discernment of Dhamma. Thus, we can say that if someone's meditation is not bringing them closer to *understanding* of sensuality and experience of dispassion – that meditation is wrong.

The breath can end at any given moment, and we wouldn't be able to do anything about it. Random organ failure, heart attack, lung collapse, none of these things would be accessible to our will power, yet, our entire life (that same "will power") directly and simultaneously depends on it. For example, if something were to happen to the vital functions of our body, our life would end that very moment. Regardless of where our hopes and intentions were aiming at the time. This recognition can be very unpleasant for an average inauthentic man of the world and it could result in the experience of a tremendous fear and dread. It is the aim of the mindfulness of death to cut through the manifold layers of that inauthenticity. But, as the Buddha has himself seen, it can sometimes be too much to handle; if a person realizes one's own mortality too fast and is not prepared for it. Hence the mindfulness of breathing comes as a more gradual replacement. A replacement that still, very much, leads in the same direction of recognizing the inherent insecurity of one's own life. This insecurity manifests through realizing the impermanence of breath, *while* one mindfully breathes. So, the difference between mindfulness of breath and mindfulness of death is not in its "object", but in a *point of view.* (or where the mindfulness is anchored in).

In 'death meditation' the point of view is in one's *sense of Self*. This is more "personal" approach (which is why it is sharper, quicker, and thus *riskier*). In 'breath meditation' the point of view is placed on the *intentional act of breathing*. By doing so, one's sense of Self is not in the direct center of the experience. (as opposed to the thought "*I will* die", for example). Either way, one can realize that no matter how volitional an act (of breathing) might be, it is fundamentally rooted away from one's control. (Control that is the exemplification of one's sense of Self.). This becomes clear when one recognizes that *while* breathing, the body (or the lungs, or heart, etc.) could stop working. They *could* fail. That whole dimension, where the failure would come from, would remain entirely "inaccessible" to one's intentions and will. No amount of one's volition would be able to "cross" that threshold of control that is determined by the present body that is simply "able to breath". (i.e. unobstructed airways, functioning lungs, beating heart, etc.). In simple terms: one's sense of control, intentions, will, sense of Self, are all bound up with presently arisen functioning body. And the *presence* of that body is not accessible to one's will. (If it were so, we wouldn't be susceptible to illness, aging and death.). Recognition of that lack of access to the fundamental aspects of one's own life, is the recognition of *impermanence*. Thus, in mindfulness of breathing, one exposes oneself to the sharp truth of *anicca*, but without winding oneself up through the anxious contemplation of death.

We can go as far as to say that one's life is *completely* rooted outside one's own sense of control. In other words, one's ability to exercise will and control, is something that one has no control over. For example: if something random, (an accident or, a disease,) were to simply block the air passages, no amount of intentional breathing would be able to help us. Yet, our whole life would depend on it.

Correctly discerning this, results in the *right* dispassion. And that means having no desire for either life or death.

The reason why this is very important to see is that many people use a mere pleasure that they derive from meditation as a criterion for their progress. But, pleasure is secondary, and is not something an unawakened being should use to judge things against. Pleasure is not the measure of success, it's the unshakeable composure of peace in the face of death, that is. Thus, one's meditation of breath should establish itself upon mindfulness of the impermanence as described above. It should not become something agreeable that one uses for not dealing with the world.

A dying man can only rely upon his wisdom, if he developed it. Wisdom is not dependent upon any phenomenon originated upon six senses. It is developed on the basis of the *discernment* of the same. That's why when one's senses start to wither and die, the knowledge of their nature remains unaffected. When there is no wisdom, there will be despair, in the face of death.

by Ajahn Nyanamoli Thero

Notes on Meditation

"1. Mindfulness of breathing, bhikkhus, developed and repeatedly practised, is of great fruit, of great benefit; mindfulness of breathing, bhikkhus, developed and repeatedly practised, perfects the four foundations of mindfulness; the four foundations of mindfulness, developed and repeatedly practised, perfect the seven enlightenment factors; the seven enlightenment factors, developed and repeatedly practised, perfect knowledge and freedom…

2. Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, established mindfulness in front of him, ever mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

3. Breathing in long, he knows, 'I breathe in long'; or breathing out long, he knows, 'I breathe out long.'

4. Breathing in short, he knows, 'I breathe in short'; or breathing out short, he knows, 'I breathe out short.'

5. 'Experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe in,' he trains himself thus; 'experiencing the whole body, I shall breathe out,' he trains himself thus.

6. 'Calming the bodily determination, I shall breathe in,' he trains himself thus; 'calming the bodily determination, I shall breathe out,' he trains himself thus…"

Ānāpānasati Sutta, MN 118.

1. The practice of *ānāpānasati* or mindfulness of breathing represents a phenomenological exercise in developing the principle of simultaneity (*akālikā dhamma*). This is accomplished by the sufficient establishing of *mindfulness* and *knowledge* of what one is supposed to do and discern.[8] It is an exercise because it requires one actively engaging in and being aware of the *act of breathing*, and it develops the principle of simultaneity because *while* one is actively breathing, one is aware of one's actions (body, feelings, and thoughts). These are two *different*, simultaneously present things: the physical or *bodily act* of breathing, and the mental *reflexive thoughts* of one doing that very act. One is not supposed to be favoured on account of the other; a person should not be *overdoing* the breathing (i.e. turning it into a forceful breathing exercise) nor should he be *underdoing it* (i.e. forgetting about the *act* of breathing that is being performed, and letting it happen unawares). In the same sense one should not *overthink* one's thinking (i.e. get lost in thought). The point is to mindfully breathe *while* remain fully aware of oneself-mindfully-breathing, or – to put it simply – to remain aware of the present phenomenon of "I am breathing."

2. Breathing is an intentional action, not a habit, and there is volition involved in every single breath a person takes. The reason why most people think breathing is an automated process is because they are

[8] Which is why in order to correctly do any of the practices found in the Suttas, one needs the right view first.

almost never aware of it. Thus the intentional side of the breath remains obscured. [9]By being an act (*kamma*), it has potential, if understood as such, to reveal the nature of all acts (present, future and past), of everything one has ever intentionally done and planning to do. By being an intentional act, breathing shares the same universal nature as all good and evil actions in this world. The reason why breathing is such a suitable act for the practice of mindfulness [10] is because it is *an immediately neutral action*, there is no actual good or bad involved in it. Thus, although it shares the same nature as all these other more "kammically" (and consequentially) *engaging* acts, there are no future results involved that would pertain to oneself and others. The merit of an in-breath ceases with an out-breath.

3. As we see from the opening excerpt, by "training oneself thus…," a monk develops mindfulness of both *immediate* and *possible* action (*kamma*): "I breathe in/out (thus)…," and "(thus) I shall breathe in/out…." This kind of mindfulness when developed leaves nothing out, and one is simply, yet steadily, becoming more aware of the nature of action in general *while* that very action is actually present. Ultimately of course, this leads to the full transparency of that "I", in that experience of breathing as a whole, and its utterly redundant *nature* that is being gratuitously assumed. [11] This nature, if mindfulness pursued to the extent necessary,[12] can eventually be completely understood and the gratuitous "I" destroyed. This, however, should not be taken in a sense that the phenomenon of "I" would disappear like it was never there, but in a sense that that "I" will cease *to be* "me" and "mine". It will remain just standing there, hollow and dry.

4. The reason why it is recommended that one should *sit* when exercising mindfulness of breathing is because such a posture offers the least distractions to one's mind. When seated, one will not be engaging in any *other* action different from breathing (and passively sitting of course). So, the only thing that one is going to be *doing* is breathing. In this way it can be understood that sitting is the *most optimal* posture to have, so that one wouldn't be wasting any effort. Consequently, with the further development of the discernment of the simultaneously present phenomena, and with the strengthening of mindfulness, one can more freely assume other postures and not remain confined to sitting alone. Furthermore, even engaging in other acts, for example: "*while* breathing, I am sweeping the floor," will not be a distraction for one's mindfulness in any way. In this particular instance, one's mindfulness and discernment is *divided*, or shared by, *two* simultaneously present actions (sweeping and breathing), *while* one is also simultaneously *aware of that thing as a whole*. And this division can continue as far as the strength of one's mindfulness allows, though there is no particular benefit and reason in pushing it.

5. Sometimes people assume that in *ānāpānasati* one is mindful of the "body of breath," as opposed to just one's (experience of) body. [13] This rendering comes from the confusion and lack of phenomenological insight into the nature of (appearing) body. If one is to understand that whether it is the ordinary experience of one's body in everyday existence, or an unusual one resulting from the new practice of concentration, or even a strange sense of lightness of one's body on drugs, in phenomenological terms – body is *just there*. Thus, again, regardless of the *particular way* one's body presents itself, it is the phenomenon of body that is present, and that's what one should be concerned with. So, when practising mindfulness of breathing, one *actually* devotes direct attention to the 'act of breathing,' *that body* (or that strange-sense-of-body) that emerges as a phenomenon, *peripherally*, is *that which is the body*, in that experience right then and there. In this way one experiences one's body *through* an act of breathing, which is why the Buddha said that body, as one of the foundations of mindfulness, is brought to fulfilment in the practice of *ānāpānasati*. [14]

By being able to see peripherally that which appears as peripheral, but simultaneously present, one does not conceive it. It is the intention in regard to the peripheral, [15] which tends to make things *actual* [16] that carries appropriation. If one succeeds in leaving it peripheral (i.e. the way it has arisen), one is practicing mindfulness correctly. The tendency towards 'conceivings' will slowly fade when the mindfulness reaches

[9]Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Clearing the Path, p. 195.

[10]As recommended in SN 54:9.

[11]Whether it is "I am breathing in," or "I shall breathe in," through mindful repetition the "I" begins to stand out, so to speak, and when paired with understanding, the more it "stands out," the less it is mine.

[12]Cf. MN 10.

[13]This should not be mistaken as "sensations". See below.

[14]The same principle applies to the other foundations, namely – feelings, mind and thoughts.

[15]That which is simultaneously present, but "less" there, less actual.

[16]Or: "Right in front of us"; to "take them up."

the necessary extent. Again, *knowledge* of what the conceiving is (i.e. not understanding the phenomenon of simultaneously and dependently present and *leaving it* as such), is an absolute requirement, because without it this whole practice won't bear fruits of any fundamental importance. However, even a *puthujjana*, by trying to understand what the correct practice of mindfulness is, might actually understand it, and then cease to be a *puthujjana*, so this whole practice should be encouraged regardless.[17]

6. The contemporary Buddhist outlook usually equates the practice of *ānāpānasati* with the practice of *jhāna*s, and if not regarded as same, it is too often thought that by practicing *ānāpānasati* one will by default "enter" a *jhāna*. I suspect this assumption stems from the commentarial times, whereby various meditation techniques, that revolve around the idea of the mindfulness of breathing, were concocted and advertised as something that would directly lead to the experience of *jhāna*s. [18]

*Jhāna*s are the establishments of mind, and as such they are to be developed upon the sufficient degree of mindfulness, which in return can be established upon various different things, *ānāpānasati* being one of them. [19] Thus, it should be clear, that the practice of *jhāna* is a fundamentally different practice from *ānāpānasati*. While *ānāpānasati* shares a nature of the *phenomenological* exercise of one's actions in regard to body, feelings, mind and thoughts, *jhāna* is less of that, but more of *an establishment* of one's mind upon *a certain way of attending to things* (in this case upon a phenomenological surmounting of *the sensual domain*), and the discernment involved therein. In other words, by *understanding* what *jhāna* is, one enters it,[20] not by performing a set of prescribed motions that somehow make it "happen" to one.

Obviously, one can develop and establish an unwavering mindfulness through the practice of *ānāpānasati*, and once established one could *change one's outlook* and with such mindfulness recognize the *extent of sensuality*, as a phenomenon, and what exactly it *entails*, and by doing so step outside of it, so to speak. In this way one would enter the first *jhāna*, where that mindfulness would remain fully established and can be developed even further.[21] It is clear here that it is not that *ānāpānasati* in itself took one automatically into a *jhāna*, but that the change of *attending to things did*,[22] once the mindfulness was strong enough. Furthermore, *jhāna* is not taught as a goal in itself, as *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* (MN 119) tells us, but as one of the forms that can bring one's mindfulness to the necessary fulfillment.

So, in order for any of these paragraphs to be intelligible, one will have to abandon the notions of "meditation techniques" and all the contemporary ideas of the practice of concentration, which is usually taught at the expense of mindfulness and with underlying wrong views (such as mystical absorptions and novelty experiences that then become a measure of one's "success"). When a person hears the term *ānāpānasati*, he will be better off thinking "development of mindfulness" – the samemindfulness that he has to varying extents in his day-to-day experiences.

7. "Meditation techniques" are usually sets of fairly random motions and performances, idiosyncratic to the particular meditation teacher, that require one to follow certain prescribed steps which if performed correctly, and with some luck, will make one experience "something". Often, in return, that same teacher would have to "interpret" back these experiences for one.

To put it bluntly: if one needs to be *told* by *another*, what the *significance* of one's experience was, this means one has not *understood* it *by oneself*. It means one is still concerned with the particular aspects (i.e. the random contents) of one's meditation experience, and one fails to see the general *nature* of it all. As a result, any external interpretation is regarded as an *explanation*, which means that phenomenology remains buried deep down under layers of pre-concieved ideas and assumptions. This holds true even more when it comes to the idea of "attainments", which are also regarded as experiences that "happen" to one, almost against one's will and as a result of "a very good technique" one has employed. There is a concealed irony there that

[17] This doesn't mean that any (i.e. all sorts of contradictory) practice of meditation is being endorsed here. This is because, it is for certain that for a puthujjana, no matter how much effort he makes, if the practice he has chosen or been given is inherently wrong, no right results can come from it. One does not accidentally become sotāpanna, it doesn't "happen to one" as a blessing. One builds it up, develops it and attains it through "manly efforts," as the Suttas often say, and because it was not given to one, it cannot be taken away.

[18] Which inevitably acquired countless mystical connotations that they maintain to this day.

[19] Cf. SN 54:8.

[20] Cf. SN 40:1.

[21] Cf. MN 119.

[22] Cf. SN 54:8.

escapes such people, because if one needs to be "confirmed" a *sotāpanna*, for example, by one's teacher, this means one doesn't know that one actually is a *sotāpanna*, which means that one can still *doubt it*, which in return means that one is not freed from the fetter of doubt, i.e. actually not a *sotāpanna*. The irony is further amplified if the teacher goes ahead and "confirms" one. If one is to actually understand what "being free from doubt" (and the other two fetters, characteristic of the *sotāpanna*) is, one would realize how *non-applicable* any external affirmation or denial is.[23]

How obstructive to phenomenology (i.e. mindfulness) this whole way of practising is, can be seen from the nature of *understanding*. One understands things when one *understands* them, when the knowledge in *regard to the nature* of an arisen thing is there, and not when one successfully goes through a set of methods and observances that relies on almost mechanical set of motions one has to perform attentively. Any bodily act and any act that pertains to the bodily domain (such as the celebrated and misguided notion of "sensations" [24] which involve observing different parts and aspects of one's body) is simply irrelevant for the discerning of the *nature* of an arisen phenomenon. [25] It is misleading and obstructive, because it is impossible to engage in a technique without the implicit belief that a set of motions, that the chosen technique consists of, performed in a particular mechanical order, will *somehow*, by itself, *reveal* the nature of things. By holding this *belief* and *faith* in a technique, one will not be *trying* to understand things, and by not making attempts toward the understanding, one will definitely remain devoid of it.

One sees things correctly – as phenomena – by *understanding* what the phenomenon is, and there is no technique that can make this magically occur. Thus, the closest to what *one should do* in order to obtain understanding is: *trying to understand*. For as long as a person is attempting to understand and see the nature of an arisen thing, that person might actually succeed in it, for it is certain that understanding cannot occur in someone who is not trying to understand. Incidentally (or not), there is never any mention of meditation techniques in the Suttas, but 'understanding' and 'discernment', as a way to reach the final freedom from suffering, is described and referred to countless times.

When one looks at the experience mindfully, it becomes apparent that regardless of the content of the particular experience, the nature of experience is present. So, whether it is the experience of "impatiently-waiting-for-a-bus," or the experience of tiredness after a physical exertion, or strange and novel experience of a powerful light that occurred in front of me while meditating on a seven-day technique-based meditation retreat, all I should be concerned about is that *an experience* is *there* and as such it needs to be *understood*. [26] This means that investing effort into meditation techniques is fundamentally a waste of time if one is concerned with understanding the Dhamma, and the most one can accomplish is relaxation, a sense of peace coming from withdrawal from the habitual world of senses, or – worse – fortification of the wrong views based on a misinterpretation of the *nature of* the novelty experiences. Either way, the results of any technique one might engage in, will remain *worldly*, and will draw its power from a temporary change of one's environment, one's usual way of regarding things. In any case, the "benefits" and "helpfulness" of a chosen technique will simply share the nature of a phenomenon of *novelty* that one is experiencing. As such, it means it will run out, and one will have to either do it harder, or change the technique.

If people attend meditation retreats as a form of a temporary escape from the busy and oppressing world, by all means they should do it, as often as they can. However, rather than engaging in a practice of a technique

[23] Cf. Sn 1:3,21 (verse 55).

[24] Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Clearing the Path, p. 75.

[25] In other words, it is impossible to perform an action which in and by itself would be able to overcome the nature of action, which is the whole point of the Buddhist practice: overcoming kamma. Through action, good or bad or neutral, all one accomplishes is the maintenance of the nature of action: by acting, one remains bound by action. If this would not be the case, the Buddha and the Dhamma would not be required for the freedom from suffering, and all one would have to do is simply perform certain things and by doing so, automatically reach nibbāna, or even better: all one would have to do is choose to be in nibbāna and one would attain it.

[26] And one also comes to realize that for as long as one is alive, experience is always there, and one doesn't have to do anything in order for it to be so. And this is where the real purpose of a meditation technique becomes apparent: one is after a particular type of experience (regarded as more desirable and lofty) as a form of replacement or escape from another type of experience (regarded as undesirable and unpleasant). "I want to experience this, I don't want to experience that (or lack-of-this). Thus, all one is trying to do is experience pleasant by directly displacing unpleasant, i.e. one wants to fulfill one immediate desires. For as long as one remains concerned and puts value on the particulars of an experience, the nature of it will remain unknown. This is the reason why any meditation of this kind is a meditation that is utterly within the sensual domain and cannot go beyond it, which is what MN 108 (iii, 14) refers to.

and "sensation watching," they would be better off using their quiet time in trying to understand the nature of things according to the way the Buddha described it, whether sitting, walking or lying down. For it is that "nature" which the Dhamma means and refers to, and anything that is not dealing with this, or anything that is obscuring that very nature (i.e. phenomena) of things, Fconsequently is not the Dhamma, no matter how "helpful" and "useful" it might be. [27] In different words, one's experience is phenomenological (i.e. the five aggregates are all simultaneously present in their respective domains), and this means that nature of things comes *first*, [28] before anything one *does* based on that nature. Doing a technique in order to practice the Dhamma (i.e. see the nature of things) is like exiting the house, so as to be in it. It's a contradiction in terms.

8. In the first establishment of mind, the first *jhāna*, the appropriation of the bodily action (intention) ceases. This is accomplished when that *thought*, which in ordinary experience *stands for* that which is the body (and anything originating from it) is seen in its phenomenological nature, i.e. *as thought.* [29]When the mind is thus established upon the signs and characteristics of one's *thought*, as an arisen *thing*, that thought is recognized as being *indifferent*[30] to anything other then itself, such as body and matter.[31] Through that very indifference, the thought, even if it thinks about the body and anything bodily, ceases to stand for 'that' which is the body (*rūpa*). This is why the first *jhāna* is primarily characterized by thinking-and-pondering (*vittakavicāra*) and it is also why the sensual domain (i.e. domain that is pertaining to the body) has been surmounted. The result of this cessation is the subsiding of speech – the physical, bodily aspect of it. By dropping the appropriation of the bodily intention, through the surmounting of its whole domain, one clearly sees the whole *body* as an independent thing, just sitting there, already given. Even if one is to make a bodily intention, one would see that intention too, as something that is inevitably and inseparably confined to the bodily domain and as such: as something that can never be "*mine*". This is why the first establishment of mind is also sufficient for the final knowledge.[32]

Furthermore, it is because of this very principle of thought ceasing to 'stand for' that which is the body, that the *jhāna*s are wholesome in themselves, even if not accompanied by understanding. By "ceasing to stand for" the *wrong order* of the experience is *reversed*, and the structurally independent, simultaneously present and indifferent to each other individual domains of the aggregates are experienced *as they are*, without the distortion introduced by *assumption* in regard to them. This is why the Buddha praised the practice of *jhāna*, because if the person develops them correctly, even as a *puthujjana*, he would require very little instruction in order to understand things and remove all conceivings and *avijjā*.

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

Feelings are Suffering

How should one free oneself from suffering?

The very first step that one should make is to learn how not to *crave* the cessation of suffering. At first glance this might seem simple, but actually it is not so straightforward at all; for we cannot assume that an untrained, ordinary person even knows what truly suffering is.

[27]People themselves might often struggle to reconcile the nature of meditation techniques with the nature of the Buddha's Teaching, but they usually end up ignoring this because it feels like the immediate application of a technique is helping them and makes them feel better. The problem with this is that they, as puthujjanas, have no criteria to determine what "helpful" really is. Thus, they just end up following their own feelings and assumptions again, but this time on the pretext of Buddhism and spiritual practice.

[28]One can be ignorant of the phenomenological nature only because that nature is there, present.

[29]Cf. my essay Not Perceiveing the Feeling (Meanings, p. 43) where I said that it is the feeling that feels, perception that perceives and thought that thinks (I am paraphrasing).

[30]This is a type of structural indifference and this can be understood in terms of the superimposition of the respective domains of body (matter) and thoughts. Both of these domains are simultaneously present, but they don't interfere – they are "indifferent" to each other. Furthermore, it is not just that they don't interfere, it is that they cannot interfere, even if one is to want it. This principle actually applies to the whole experience, namely: the five aggregates. Crossing from one domain into another is structurally inconceivable, but as long as one does not fully understand that, by not-understanding one conceives it. For more on this cf. my essays The Infinity of the Mind and Not Perceiving the Feeling (Meanings, p. 39 and p.43).

[31]And this very indifference was obscured through the assumption of 'body' (i.e. matter) in one's thoughts. Cf. Resistance and Designation (Meanings, p. 47).

[32]"Bhikkhus, I say that the destruction of the taints occurs in dependence on the first jhāna…" – AN 9:36.

In order to know *dukkha* it is not enough just to suffer. To know *dukkha*, one has to recognize, within the present experience, what *is* and what *is not* necessary. The point is that, in the experience of pain, certain aspects are inevitable, while others, are not. In different words – the 'painfulness' of pain is suffering and not the pain itself.

Let me get back to the opening statement that one should not crave the cessation of suffering; why is that essential? The *immediate reason* of our suffering, as the Buddha tells us, is our craving or *taṇha*. It is because of *taṇha* that our experience of pain is *painful*. This applies to the other two kinds of feeling too. Thus, we can say, that it is because of craving that *feelings* are *dukkha*. In the first type, unpleasant feeling, craving for the *cessation* of that feeling causes one to suffer: the painful feeling is present there, directly opposed to one's desire for it to not-be, to disappear. In this way a discrepancy is created, a discrepancy which is nothing but *dukkha*. In the second type, pleasant feeling, craving for *more* of that feeling is manifested, thus the *actual* pleasant feeling appears as unpleasant, when attended from the direction of that increased pleasure which is *craved for*. The present feeling of pleasure becomes inadequate, a lack which needs to be satisfied. Again, the discrepancy arises, which one tries to overcome by a further pursuit of various things in the world which, will *intensify* his pleasure further. One hopes that such attempt will 'fill the gap' within, but needless to say, that is impossible since the discrepancy is actually being constantly *generated* by the presence of *taṇha*, and *not* by the various objects in the world.

"Thought and lust are a man's sensuality,

Not the various things in the world;

Thought and lust are a man's sensuality,

The various things just stand there in the world;

But the wise get rid of desire therein."

– A.VI 63/iii, 411

When it comes to third type, neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feelings (i.e. neutral), suffering is experienced as a result of one craving *for feelings* themselves, since neutral feeling is not recognized at all:

"Neutral feeling is pleasant when known [as such],

and unpleasant when not-known [as such]"

– M. 44/i, 303

So, to summarize, one's experience of pain is *not* the reason for one's suffering. It is rather the presence of craving, in one's experience, that suffering *is there*. As long as this remains the case, one will be a "victim" of one's own feelings, be they pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

Existence means control

In order for something to exist (*bhava*), in order for it to be, in a full and appropriated sense, that thing has to be given first, in the form of an experience as a whole. When I say 'given', this should be understood in the sense that we can only "find" things as already being there, in the world. (Cf. Sartre's statement in *Being & Nothingness* that every thing comes *with* past). The fact is that things can only be found when they are attended to and this means that – fundamentally speaking – they are *beyond* one's control[33]: one is not their *creator*. Thus, one's experience as a whole *cannot* be controlled; the most a person can do is to modify an already given state of affairs, on a more particular level.

Take the five-aggregates as an example: their nature is to appear, disappear, and change while standing, at *their own accord*. It is only with *upādāna* that this characteristic is obscured[34], and in such cases the apparent

[33] Even if one can control them, first they have to be. In other words – the nature of control is seen as something beyond our control.
[34] As a matter of fact, it's not only the characteristic that is obscured, the five-aggregates are not seen either, most of the time.

Self becomes the fundamental agent of the process instead, or at least this is how it appears to a *puthujjana*. One who is not free from *upādāna*, and the Self-view, confuses the fact that the five-aggregates (or in this case the five-holding-aggregates) *can* be modified or affected once they arise, with the notion that they are controlled. This notion of control also supports (or feeds) the view that 'Self' is their creator, which in return feeds that notion, and so on indefinitely. This is why with 'Self' there comes the perception of *mastery* over one's experience – "*Attā*, 'self', is fundamentally a notion of *mastery over things*." (Ñāṇavīra Thera, *Notes on Dhamma*, DHAMMA)

The Self then, as a "master", appears as something different, something *apart* from the five-holding-aggregates. Furthermore, the Self keeps finding proof for its existence by constantly interfering and modifying (when possible) the arisen states of the five-holding-aggregates. The Self finds pleasure in doing so.

On the other hand, if the Self would see that, despite all of the proof, its mastery actually *requires* (or *directly depends* upon) the five-aggregates, the notion of control would cease[35]. It becomes clear that 'Self' cannot possibly exercise any fundamental control over their appearing, disappearing, and change while standing. This is why by contemplating this long enough, one can become an *arahat*:

"Then, monks, at another time the Buddha Vipassī dwelt contemplating the appearing and disappearing of the five-holding-aggregates… And as he remained contemplating the appearing and disappearing of the five-holding-aggregates, before long his mind was freed from the fetters without remainder." (Mahāpadāna Sutta, D. 14/ii, 35)

Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

With birth, Death applies

1. We are born. We come into this world through our birth. As we shall see in the following paragraphs, there are many ways that one *can* think of one's birth. However, from a phenomenological point of view our birth is always here *with* us. The fact that one is constantly engaged with the world of one's desires, decisions and miseries, means that one is born – his birth is *present*. Obviously, for someone not used to thinking phenomenologically, it might be fairly difficult to pull oneself out of the habitual way of regarding things as something which is clearly defined, something palpable in one's experience. For such a person 'birth' *is* an event from the past, and we shall address this issue in the paragraphs to follow. However, there is also a simpler and easily overlooked reason for one failing to grasp the phenomenological description of 'birth'. In our language the term 'birth', as a designation of experience, carries certain *past* connotations. These connotations are absolutely gratuitous, and we shall see that the reason for that lies in people's *views* (*diṭṭhi*). The established usage of terminology draws its significance (i.e. the meaning of its words) from the most *common* views (on the level of humanity or a particular culture), about the nature of experience. Needless to say, the common views are rarely correct, especially when it comes to the experience of an individual. These views can never represent the real *order of things*. Thus, apart from the way we speak, and use the language, nothing requires us to think that birth can, and shall *only* be understood as a past event which has started and ended *in* time.

2. Naturally, it is possible for one to regard, and understand to a certain extent, birth as something which has happened to him a long time ago, even without having the actual memory of the event. However, this kind of limited understanding is only possible in the *objective* (scientific) *view* of the world, and oneself. We can even go a step further and say that it is precisely *because* of that view that one thinks of birth (and other things, including ageing-and-death) in these temporal categories. With this kind of view, the objective world in front of one, the world which is *in* time, takes precedence over one's experience as such, which is *of* time (cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, *Notes on Dhamma*, FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE, Dynamic Aspect, para. 5). One starts regarding the objects that appear *through* one's experience, as something more fundamental than the

[35]For a puthujjana it is not enough to see this once. It is only with the repetition of this insight (achieved through effort), that the habitual view of control will disappear, and be replaced (gradually too) with the view of an inherent lack of control – the view of impermanence. When it is seen that impermanence underlies every project of the Self, the Self ceases to be Self, since without its mastery, selfhood cannot stand. (Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Notes on Dhamma, PARAMATTHA SACCA, para. 6)

experience itself – he puts second that which is to come first, and he puts first that which is to come second.[36] As a result of this one starts regarding oneself objectively as also being *in* time. Thus, time develops into a category which has become *external* to everything, and all of the things appear as being "within" it[37]. Therefore, one sees that others are born, their event of birth occurs in time, when he observes it externally. But because he views himself externally too, he naturally (i.e. in conformity with his view) comes to assume that his birth has *also* occurred some time ago in the past. One also assumes, since he can see it in his everyday experience, that death *will* happen to him in that same 'external' sense, "as it happens to others all the time". By regarding things in this way, he, as an individual, does not feel threatened by any of it, until the *actual* death comes of course. So, we can see that one doesn't adopt this objective view voluntarily – when *avijjā* is present, the view is developed naturally as the quickest way of offering one assurance from a threatening world. The world and one's experience becomes explainable and measurable – one has regained *control*.

Let us get back to the phenomenon of 'birth', we were discussing. The Buddha referred to 'birth' as: "Whatever birth, taking birth, descent, coming-to-being, coming-forth, manifestation of aggregates, and acquisition of [sense] spheres of the various beings in this or that group of beings, that is called birth." (Sammāditṭhi Sutta, M. 9/i 50)

Thus, although we can agree that birth is some sort of a "beginning", so to speak, a "manifestation of the aggregates", what obliges us to think that that beginning has *ended* there? The fact that one keeps accepting and using the five-aggregates, the fact that one is constantly involved with the world of one's senses, doesn't that mean that one's *manifestation* of aggregates is *present*[38]? And would one be able to desire various things in the world, if those things were not manifested? If one were able to relinquish any attachment for his own body, would one be bothered when that body falls apart and dies? It is because one *affirms* that manifestation of the five-aggregates, through desire-and-lust for them, that the manifestation *exists,* it comes-into-being – with being, birth is (*bhavapaccayā jāti*). And when one regards it as 'mine', one ages, falls sick and dies (and also experiences any other misery possible in this life) – with birth, ageing-and-death (*jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ…*). If there is no being whatsoever, would manifestation be able to manifest itself? And if nothing manifested, would one be able to appropriate it? And if there is nothing which belongs to one, would one suffer on account of those things breaking up and disappearing? No, because one has escaped.

3. Let us go back to the question of when birth ends. Actually, we can even ask when does birth start? The common view is that first one is conceived, and than, after nine months or so, things culminate in one being born. But when does the conception take place or when *exactly* is one born? Is it with the formation of an embryo or with cutting of the umbilical cord? Generally, the accepted view is that birth is over when the baby comes out of the womb and into the world. And when it comes to 'general views', we all know that people often tend to blindly comply to them, taking them for granted for the most (or whole) of their lives, without even realizing they are doing so. In this case, 'birth' becomes that which accords to the majority of opinions on that subject. One chooses to conform with "what everyone else thinks", since the majority is "always in the right". One accepts Heidegger's impersonal 'They' as a dictator of one's own values, one finds *safety* in doing so. However, no matter how secure the majority's view might seem, all it takes is for someone else to come along and say (perhaps supporting it with "the latest medical research") that

[36] Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in his Phenomenology of Perception, (Routledge Classics, 2007, p. 82): I detach myself from my experience and pass to the idea. Like the object, the idea purports to be the same for everybody, valid in all times and places, and the individuation of an object in an objective point of time and space finally appears as the expression of a universal positing power. I am no longer concerned with my body, nor with time, nor with the world, as I experience them in antepredicative knowledge, in the inner communion that I have with them. I now refer to my body only as a idea, to the universe as idea, to the idea of space and the idea of time. Thus 'objective' thought (in Kierkegaard's sense) is formed – being that of common sense and of science – which finally causes us to lose contact with perceptual experience, of which it is nevertheless the outcome and the natural sequel. The whole life of consciousness is characterized by the tendency to posit objects, since it is consciousness, that is to say self-knowledge, only in so far as it takes hold of itself and draws itself together in an identifiable object. And yet the absolute positing of a single object is the death of consciousness, since it congeals the whole of existence, as a crystal placed in a solution suddenly crystallizes it.

[37] Time, as a phenomena in one's experience, is regarded as more primordial (read – 'permanent'), than the experience of things. The things seem to come and go, while the sense of time stays.

[38] Furthermore, nothing obliges us to think that 'manifestation of aggregates' refers to the event of coming-out-of-womb. The Buddha has said that "when mother and father come together and the mother is in season and the one to be tied is present, with the coming together of these three things, there is descent into the womb" (M. 38/i 265-66). Thus, the five-aggregates are already manifested, in a way, even at the stage of an embryo, and before the infant is formed. (Cf. also A.III, 61/i, 176-7)

birth actually ends when the formation of an infant is completed in the womb, and that coming out of the mother is not relevant as such, to question of birth itself. (Though, for parents, even if they happen to be those scientists, this is probably *the most* relevant part[39].) If his utterance manages to change the general opinion, if the majority of people come to accept it, we will have a new, "more accurate" view on the nature of birth. The majority might have been wrong earlier, but now it is in the right… until it changes. And one can again choose to conform to that majority and make a choice out of it, but no matter how far one goes that choice will always remain *personal*, and as such, be on the level of *an individual*. So, although one thinks what everybody else does, one nevertheless remains *responsible* for that very thinking. It becomes clear then that by choosing the majority's opinion on a certain subject (in this case 'birth), out of 'faith' in modern science (or religion) perhaps, a person chooses *his individual view* on given subject. So, by deciding to accept the scientific explanation of birth, one decides that birth, for him, is something observable, an event in the world. Thus, whether one is aware of it or not, one is responsible for the *meaning* of things in one's experience. Even if we go further and say that we could pinpoint the exact *moment* of birth[40], when, for example, conception takes place, and even if the whole of humanity, without an exception, agreed upon it, nevertheless, this would not escape the *nature* of 'view', and that is to be 'imposed' onto things in one's experience, while at the same time directly depending upon them. In our case that would most likely be the 'objective view', which is of course, based on personal preferences and inclinations[41]. Thus, for a *puthujjana* coming-out-of-womb *is that* which is birth. His birth *exists.*

The Buddha, on the other hand, talks about the *nature* of birth, as a phenomena (*dhamma*), in one's experience. He does not refer to birth as an occurrence in time, upon which even *puthujjanas* cannot agree, and this can be seen from the usual *paṭiccasamuppāda* (*p.s.*) description. In this description, *jāti* refers to that 'nature' of birth and any temporal events are completely irrelevant to it. If there is no 'birth' whatsoever, if there is no manifestation (as such) of the aggregates, a *puthujjana* would not be able to regard any event (in this case 'coming-out-of-womb') as *his*[42] birth[43]. Thus, one doesn't suffer on account of birth as an event in the past, one suffers on account of the *nature* of birth in the *present*. In *p.s.* context, 'birth' structurally *precedes* 'ageing-and-death'. 'Ageing-and-death' is not 'birth', but they wouldn't be without it – together they arise, together they cease. So, it is that with 'birth', 'ageing-and-death' (and 'sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair') *apply*. Consequently, if we were to discuss *jāramaraṇaṃ*, we could say that it is because ageing-and-death is *present*, that one will age and die (and suffer) *in* time. But, if one could manage, through an understanding

[39] And therefore it is not accidental that this is most commonly regarded as birth.

[40] This, in itself, is clearly impossible, since the "exactness", in any area of science, is determined by the capacities of one's perception (i.e. the refinement of our technology and observational instruments). (Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Notes on Dhamma, FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE, Static Aspect, para. 16.)

[41] It is very unlikely that the whole of humanity could actually agree on this (or anything), since all people are not the same. The birth of a baby, in this case, carries different significance for different individuals. A mother might say that her baby was born the moment she held it in her arms, and that it was conceived the moment she fell in love with its father. A scientist, in his carefully cultivated attitude of disinterestedness, might say that a baby is conceived when embryo cells become discernible (he observes it under his microscope!), and perhaps that it is born when it starts to breathe independently. For a doctor, involved in performing abortions, there is no question of 'baby' (i.e. 'human'), until three months are due. Thus, it is how one feels towards 'birth', how one perceives it, how one intends it, that determines what that birth is for him. ("Contacted, monks, one feels; contacted, one intends; contacted, one perceives." – Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta, iv,10.) Also, compare the passage from the Madhupiṇḍika Sutta, M. 18/i 111-112: Dependent on the eye and forms (ear, nose…) eye consciousness arise. The meeting of three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What man feels, that he perceives. What he perceives, that he thinks about. What he thinks about that he diversifies. With what he diversified as the source calculations about perceptions of diversification occupy a man with respect to past, future and present.

[42] Compare this passage from J.P. Sartre – Existentialism is Humanism, chapter on 'Freedom and Responsibility': Yet I find an absolute responsibility for the fact that my facticity (here the fact of my birth) is directly inapprehensible and even inconceivable, for this fact of my birth never appears as a brute fact but always across a projective reconstruction of my for-itself. I am ashamed of being born or I rejoice over it, or in attempting to get rid of my life I affirm that I live and I assume this life as bad. Thus in a certain sense I choose to be born. This choice itself is integrally affected with facticity since I am not able not to choose, but this facticity in turn will appear only in so far as I surpass it toward my ends. Thus facticity is everywhere, but inapprehensible; I never encounter anything except my responsibility. That is why I can not ask, "Why was I born?" or curse the day of my birth or declare that I did not ask to be born, for these various attitudes towards my birth – i.e., toward the fact that I realize a presence in the world – are absolutely nothing else but ways of assuming this birth in full responsibility and of making it mine.

[43] This can be stated even more precisely: the temporal things (events in time) are possible only because there is an atemporal structure (nature of time) – time is secondary to one's experience. Hence, the p.s. is said to be akālika, 'timeless'. (Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Notes on Dhamma, NP. & FUNDAMENTAL STRUCTURE). That is why, in the Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta, M. 9, we can see that a Noble disciple can, by understanding 'being', 'birth' or 'ageing-and-death' respectively, come to the same result – complete freedom from suffering, arahatship. P.s. can be understood by understanding all or any of its "pairs", since each of them represent, or rather are, the principle of simultaneous dependent origination – 'when this, this is' (imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti).

of the Dhamma, to free oneself from 'being' – to bring it to an end – ' birth' and 'ageing-and-death' would cease to exist for him: all of the temporal occasions for suffering would cease to be *his* suffering, since by not-being born, one doesn't have the desire to interfere with them any more – one is free.

5. Let me just say something more, for those who find it difficult to accept that the existential (phenomenological) method[44] can validly be applied to Dhamma. We can put aside Sartre, Heidegger and those like them, and disregard what they have to say about birth. However, even in that case, still, we need look no further than the *p.s.* description in order to see what the Buddha meant by 'birth'. In Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta, M. 9/i 50, it is said, as we already referred to it earlier on:

When a noble disciple has thus understood birth, the origin of birth, the cessation of birth, and the way leading to the cessation of birth… he here and now makes an end of suffering. In that way too a noble disciple is one of right view… and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

Thus, a Noble disciple, an *ariyasāvaka*, can by understanding 'birth', in the same sense that he would have understood the Four Noble Truths – directly and timelessly – free oneself and become an *arahat*. So, one may rightly ask now: would this be possible, if 'birth' were not already somehow *present*[45], as a phenomena, in our experience? How would one be able to understand birth directly and without involving time? If one's birth was indeed a distant event, in some maternity ward perhaps, one's fate would be sealed according to the Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta, since the event of birth has already passed and cannot possibly be understood directly. Fortunately, one's birth is not *in* the past, so one can, if one chooses to follow the Buddha's Teaching, cease to, in the present, regard 'birth' as his and by doing so remove himself from the domain of ageing-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. One can escape.

Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

Appearance and Existence

For a *puthujjana* the world exists. He can perceive things in that world, see them appear and disappear, he can see them changing. A *puthujjana* can also affect his surroundings and modify things according to own preferences, pursue the desirable experiences and avoid the undesirable ones—the *puthujjana* is *involved*. This 'involvement' with things represents the very core of the *puthujjana*'s 'experience as a whole'. Most people spend the majority of their lives obliviously absorbed in it, taking the course of 'involvement' for granted.[46]

It needs to be understood that these 'objects', which the *puthujjana* is fundamentally involved with, are *things* which his experience is inseparable from, for the simple virtue of being *his experience of those things*. For this reason we have to broaden the meaning of the term 'things', from usually denominating 'objects' in one's surroundings, to include *any* experience whatsoever that arises and can be discerned internally or externally (whether it is 'objects', 'tools', emotions' or 'thoughts'). In that way the term 'things' would correspond to what is meant by Pāli term *'dhamma'*. Thus, the experience of the *puthujjana*'s everyday world, his possessions, his desires and fears, anxieties and happiness are all *things* or *phenomena*. All these phenomena are completely *unknown* in their *nature*. This is why it is crucial for a *puthujjana* to recognize that a nature of a thing *exists.* This existence is not 'in' the world of the objects that are ready-to-hand, not 'in' his mind, not even between the two—but, a thing exists as an *experience*. Strictly speaking that's all that can be truthfully said, without resorting to presupposed theories, inductive observations and explanations

[44]We are not interested in the conclusions (or lack of them, as Ven. Ñāṇavīra would say) they drew from the method itself.

[45]Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, op. cit., NP., para. 9 & 10. This 'somehow' is important to note. If a puthujjana, who is not satisfied with the idea of birth being something which occurred in his past, admits that there has to be some other way in which 'birth' can be present, and if he admits that he doesn't see that way, he might make the effort to find it out, and than eventually see it.

[46]"Husserl attempts to make the natural attitude descriptively evident by pointing out that our everyday way of going about our business—dealing with things of all sorts, other people, engaged in scientific activities, recreation, and so on – involves various modalities of"belief." I simply take for granted that what I am dealing with exists and is, more or less, as it presents itself as being. Furthermore, "other actual objects are there for me as determinate, as more or less well known, without being themselves perceived or, indeed, present in any other mode of intuition" (Husserl 1982: 51)—that is, they belong within a co-intended horizon of "indeterminate actuality" (Husserl 1982:52)."—'The Blackwell Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism', Husserlian Phenomenology (by Simon Crowell), p. 19.

of the experience—the only thing that a *puthujjana* can know for certain is that 'there is an experience'. In this way it can be seen that a thing *is*, its 'being' appears and things such as pleasure, pain, emotional states, ideas, abstractions etc. that people have in their everyday lives, are in this way all *real*, they all come to exist as something that is there, that has *appeared*. No matter how ordinary or extraordinary one's experience is or might be, whether it is common or unusual, that experience exists *as such*. Even if one is going through the most obscure, ambiguous states of one's mind, those very states are valid in their nature (as obscure, as ambiguous); whether they are intimate and subjective or the most impersonal objective facts—they are all *phenomena*, they constitute the experience as a whole (which is also a *phenomenon*).

"We do not *know* what 'Being' means. But even if we ask, 'What *is* "Being"?', we keep within an understanding of the 'is', though we are unable to fix conceptually what that 'is' signifies. We do not even know the horizon in terms of which that meaning is to be grasped and fixed. *But this vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact.*

However much this understanding of Being (an understanding which is already available to us) may fluctuate and grow dim, and border on mere acquaintance with a word, its very indefiniteness is itself a positive phenomenon which needs to be clarified.[47]

The same is to be said for the even more complex categories of the *puthujjana*'s world, such as 'actions', 'choices', notions of 'good' and 'bad' and similar. They are not exempt from the phenomenological nature of things. Good or bad, skilful or not, these things *manifest* in one's experience, and as such: they are real.

A very common passage from the Suttas which describes that which is known as the 'mundane' Right View:

Atthi dinnaṃ, atthi yiṭṭhaṃ, atthi hutaṃ, atthi sukatadukkaṭānaṃ kammānaṃ phalaṃ vipāko, atthi ayaṃ loko, atthi paro loko, atthi mātā, atthi pitā, atthi sattā opapātikā, atthi loke samaṇabrāhmaṇā sammaggatā sammāpaṭipannā ye imañca lokaṃ parañca lokaṃ sayaṃ abhiññā sacchikatvā pavedentī'ti

"There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed; there is fruit and result of good and bad actions; there is this world and the other world; there is mother and father; there are spontaneously reborn beings; there are in the world good and virtuous recluses and brahmins who have realised for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world." (MN 117/iii,72)

This easily overlooked passage offers a very acute description of an *authentic* attitude of a *puthujjana*—the attitude of recognition and acknowledgment of the existence of things *as* phenomena ("*there is…"*). Someone might argue that one does not necessarily see the spontaneously reborn beings for example, but the point is that one should recognize the mere fact that there *could be* spontaneously reborn beings—the *possibility* of spontaneously reborn beings *exists* as such. And if one recognizes the validity of the appearance and existence of that possibility, an *expectation of the concrete proof* that can be obtained only through *senses* (i.e. one needs to *see* those beings) ceases to be relevant, in the same way that a view that a thing exists only if it can be experienced through the senses ceases. This attitude thus discloses the *priority* of the *phenomenal nature of things* (of one's experience), over any other view which does not assert that priority. And it is because of this very lack of the correct priority that these kinds of views are *wrong views* (as far as freedom from suffering is concerned). Thus, whatever one's experience is, whichever shape it might take—big or small, important or not, clear or ambiguous—that experience is *there* in its own phenomenological form. This by no means implies that such experience is necessarily understood, it simply means that it is recognized for what it is, even if that is as"something-which-is-not-understood". This kind of 'acknowledgement' is the authenticity that we also find the existential philosophers often referring to. Together with authenticity, there comes the sense of the *fundamental responsibility* for one's own existence[48] which is a necessary prerequisite for

[47] Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, translated by J. Macquarrie and E.S. Robinson. London: SCM Press, 1962, p. 25.

[48] A rather inspired observation of Walter Kaufmann, a distinguished Nietzsche scholar and translator, in his book Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, p. 46: "…perhaps the most compassionate and venerable of all mortals, the Buddha. . . [had said that] all man's alibis are unacceptable: no gods are responsible for his condition; no original sin; no heredity and no environment; no race, no caste, no father, and no mother; no wrong-headed education, no governess, no teacher; not even an impulse or a disposition, a complex or a childhood trauma. Man is free; but his freedom does not look like the glorious liberty of the Enlightenment; it is no longer the gift of God. Once again, man stands alone in the universe, responsible for his condition, likely to remain in a lowly state, but free to reach above the stars."

a *puthujjana*'s 'mundane' Right View[49] (which can then lead further onwards toward the 'supramundane' Right View—the view of the Path). The reason why this attitude is a necessary prerequisite is because only with this attitude will a *puthujjana* be able to *understand* that he *does not understand*, and by doing so enable himself for understanding."[50] The problem is, however, that if a common man denies that which is right in front of him in his day-to-day living, he denies the basic principles of his own experience. In other words he is denying the most immediate *appearance* of things. This results in phenomena not being seen at all. As long as this attitude persists that man is going to be deprived of the possibility of understanding the nature of the experience and consequently the nature of his own suffering. That man is *inauthentic*.[51] As the experience shows us this is all too easily done. All that is required is to simply never question the face value of one's views of the world and the experience and to never look further from one's immediate absorption in things.

For inauthentic man, when he does think about the nature of his experience and the world around him, his views would generally pertain to a common notion of a *hidden reality* behind the everyday world (either material or mental, depending on the direction his mind takes). What is meant by this is that he simply *assumes* that there is something *more* real or fundamental in relation to what he is or can experience. Simply put, if he was to assume a 'mental' type of reality, as something which underlies the present experience, he would fall into (one of the forms of) *idealism*; alternatively, if the reality was to have a more 'material' basis, he would fall into some form of *materialism* (or *realism*).[52] Either way, the *puthujjana* oscillates between the two.[53]

For example, in present times, a spiritual/mystical view of the hidden 'Reality' (one's 'true Self', or 'universal consciousness') would be a form of idealism, while the very common and prevalent scientific objectification of the experience would most certainly come under materialism. These two can serve as the two prominent poles of the Wrong View spectrum.[54] These views differ from the Right View because as they are focused on developing and providing *explanations* of the nature of one's experience, while failing to see that fundamentally they are *derived from it*. No matter how plausible and accurate a theory or an explanation of the origins and nature of the experience is, the fact is that experience, as a phenomenon, will always *have to* come *first*. This means that the explanation cannot be applied *retrospectively* to describe its own origin which is *simultaneously present*. Nevertheless, by maintaining this contradiction (which is an *assumption*) the actual

[49]"There is fruit and result of good and bad action…", i.e.: "I am responsible for what I do". Similarly, "there are… recluses and brahmins who have realised for themselves the direct knowledge…" means "Freedom from suffering is possible, and if I don't pursue it, I, myself, am responsible for that. By not pursuing it I am responsible for remaining there where suffering can arise—I am responsible for my suffering."

[50]"It is far better for a man to understand that he does not understand the Dhamma, than it is for him to believe falsely that he does understand it. The former attitude may encourage progress, the latter can only obstruct it."—CtP, pp. 57-58.

[51]For more on the everyday phenomenon of 'inauthenticity' see Hedigger, Being and Time, and J-P. Sartre, Being and Nothingess, particularly the chapter on 'Bad Faith'. See also the following lines from Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript (p. 311): "Science organizes the moments of subjectivity within a knowledge of them, and this knowledge is assumed to be the highest stage, and all knowledge is an abstraction which annuls existence, a taking of the objects of knowledge out of existence. In existence, however, such a principle does not hold. If thought speaks deprecatingly of the imagination, imagination in its turn speaks deprecatingly of thought; and likewise with the feeling. The task is not to exalt the one at the expense of the other, but to give them an equal status, to unify them in simultaneity; the medium in which they are unified is existence."

[52]Ven. Ñāṇavīra observes: "There is, however, another point: an oriented world (which is the meaning of loka in the Suttas) is the correlative of a point of view (there is a SN Sutta that specifically identifies the world with the eye, ear, nose, and so on), and consequently to deny self is to deny the world, and to assert self is to assert the world (so loko so attā). Thus we have the following scheme: Sassatavāda Assert a point of view; Asserts self— atthi attāti; Assert the world; Denies the objective existence of things— sabbaṃ natthīti Is an Idealist (Bradley, Berkeley) Uccedavāda Denies a point of view; Denies self— natthi attāti; Denies the world; Asserts the objective existence of things— sabbaṃ atthīti Is a Realist (Stebbing, Russell) If this analysis is correct it would explain why a scientist, though apparently asserting the permanence of the Universe, is, in fact, an ucchedavādin—the Universe he asserts is without a point of view, and is the negation of the world (= loka)."—StP, p. 186. Also, cf. DN 2, in particular the Ajita Kesakambalin's response.

[53]Cf. StP, p. 323.

[54]Obviously things can be a bit more complex than this, inasmuch as these opposite views have a lot in common as Merleau-Ponty observes: "We pass from absolute objectivity to absolute subjectivity, but this second idea is not better than the first and is upheld only against it, which means by it. The affinity between intellectualism and empiricism is thus much less obvious and much more deeply rooted than is commonly thought. It arises not only from the anthropological definition of sensation used equally by both, but from the fact that both persist in the natural or dogmatic attitude, and the survival of sensation in intellectualism is merely a sign of this dogmatism. Intellectualism accepts as completely valid the idea of truth and the idea of being in which the formative work of consciousness culminates and is embodied, and its alleged reflection consists in positing as powers of the subject all that is required to arrive at these ideas. The natural attitude, by throwing me into the world of things, gives me the assurance of apprehending a 'real' beyond appearance, the 'true' beyond illusion."—Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, p. 45.

structural order of the experience is assumed *different*. And since that's all a *puthujjana* has in front of him, that *assumed nature* of the experience *exists as such*. Because of this, the nature of a wrong view is to provide a man with reasons and causes, which achieves nothing except concealing and contradicting the notion of the immediate appearance of things and one's own existential responsibility. When Reality is hidden behind the appearances, which are then no more than 'illusory', whatever a *puthujjana* does and whatever he feels ceases to be *relevant*, even if it's the most immediate and personal suffering. If it isn't irrelevant just yet, a person with this kind of view will certainly strive in order to make it so by blending it into the all-embracing view that the world is nothing more than illusion, and as such whatever comes to be experienced in that world is disregarded because it doesn't belong to Reality. Consequently, by not pertaining to Reality, the things in one's environment can be ignored, and one will feel justified in doing so. Thus, for a *puthujjana* of this kind, things encountered in everyday life don't fit into his *view of reality*—they are dismissed, they are *not understood*.[55] In the view of scientific objectification on the other hand, the *puthujjana*'s actions are neatly explained in terms of various collections of nerve impulses, reflexes, genes, sensations and so on. In this case the significance of one's actions cannot extend beyond the threshold of the molecular compounds of one's body, which then serves as the *reason* (or *excuse*) for the *puthujjana*'s desires, emotions, concerns etc. [56] In both types of views the responsibility for the immediate intentions and decisions is abolished, by way of being included in the mystical or molecular forms (for example "God's Will" or genetic "predispositions")—which serve to explain one's world. In either case that responsibility is not *felt*, its *nature* is *disowned*. (Might this perhaps be the *real purpose* of these views?) Thus, the inauthenticity remains for as long as there is a view which places itself *over* the existence as such, as something which is more primordial in itself: the Reality *behind* or *beneath* the appearance, the molecular structure of the world, again—*beneath* the things in the way we encounter them in the world. Consequently, things like 'good' or 'bad', 'results' (of one's actions), 'being reborn', 'sacrifice', 'other world' and so on[57] have no place in one's experience.[58] As such, they become very ambiguous categories of one's life, which an individual can choose to accept and believe in, or perhaps reject according to his personal choice. (The overall decline of morality in the world indicates which kind of choice prevails.) In this way these things are pushed in the domain of religion and ethics and regarded as 'convictions' and 'observances' that one can follow if one pleases.

Thus, whenever the priority of existence is not recognized, the *nature* of things is obscured. Clearly the practice of Dhamma is then out of the question. Nevertheless, for a *puthujjana* the possibility of seeing the structural priority of existence as a whole over the particular instances his Self derives from it, still remains, and only when he admits this, the real work can begin.

The Appearance in Its Priority

So, with the mystical view on one end, and the objective, scientific one on the other, the recognition of one's

[55]"To have faith in the Reality of the 'external world', whether rightly or wrongly; to"prove" this Reality for it, whether adequately or inadequately; to presuppose it, whether explicitly or not—attempts such as these which have not mastered their own basis with full transparency, presuppose a subject which is proximally worldless or unsure of its world, and which must, at bottom, first assure itself of a world. Thus, from the very beginning, Being-in-a-world is disposed to "take things" in some way [Auffassen], to suppose, to be certain, to have faith—a way of behaving which itself is always a founded mode of Being-in-the-world. The 'problem of Reality' in the sense of the question whether an external world is present-at-hand and whether such world can be proved, turns out to be an impossible one, not because its consequences lead to inextricable impasses, but because the very entity which serves as its theme, is one which, as it were, repudiates any such formulation of the question. Our task is not to prove that an 'external world' is present-at-hand or to show how it is present-at-hand, but to point out why Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, has the tendency to bury the 'external world' in nullity 'epistemologically' before going on to prove it. The reason for this lies in Dasein's falling and in the way in which the primary understanding of Being has been diverted to Being as presence-at-hand—a diversion which is motivated by that falling itself."—Heidegger, op. cit. p. 250.

[56]"Behaviour is thus hidden by the reflex, the elaboration and patterning of stimuli, by a longitudinal theory of nervous functioning, which establishes a theoretical correspondence between each element of the situation and an element of the reaction…"The traditional notion of sensation was not a concept born of reflection, but a late product of thought directed towards objects, the last element in the representation of the world, the furthest removed from its original source, and therefore the most unclear. Inevitably science, in its general effort towards objectification, evolved a picture of the human organism as a physical system undergoing stimuli which were themselves identified by their physico-chemical properties, and tried to reconstitute actual perception on this basis, and to close the circle of scientific knowledge by discovering the laws governing the production of knowledge itself, by establishing an objective science of subjectivity…"—Merleau-Ponty, op. cit. pp. 8, & 12.

[57]Things that are not explainable through the observational methods of inductive sciences.

[58]"The theory of sensation, which builds up all knowledge out of determinate qualities, offers us objects purged of all ambiguity, pure and absolute, the ideal rather than the real themes of knowledge."—Merleau-Ponty, op. cit. p. 13.

personal existence cannot arise. Because of these inauthentic attitudes, which are nevertheless *normal* attitudes of the *puthujjana*'s everyday life, it would be correct to say that for him things don't even *exist*, in a correct sense of that word. Only with the development of the rudimentary notions of authenticity, through the practice of mindfulness and restraint and reflection, can a *puthujjana* begin to notice, little by little, the nature of his experience as a whole—*phenomena* can start to *appear*. It is only in this way that one can understand what is meant by the 'being' of things, which is nothing fundamentally different than the 'being' of myself.[59] Through the establishing of authenticity a *puthujjana* can observe that things around him, and his experience as a whole, appear and disappear. In the beginning it seems like this is happening while his *sense of the experience as a whole* stays *unchanged*. This 'unchangedness' holds priority over the *puthujjana*'s experience, and that's because in its nature it presents itself as something which is remaining the *same* or *independent* (i.e. unchanging) throughout the appearance of things which comes and goes. It looks as if things that appear are 'included' within that general non-changing sense of the experience. The appearance of things —or, simply, things *belong* to it. Although there is no concealed 'Being' behind that which appears since the basic authenticity has been established, this nevertheless results in the notion that fundamentally things *are*, and *that is why* they appear. Thus, 'Being' is assumed to be an ontological phenomenon that manifests itself *through* the 'appearance'. One might not be able to find it apart from appearance, but nevertheless, a *puthujjana* thinks—"things exist, that's why they can appear". In this way one assumes the ontological priority of existence over the appearance. Thus, a *puthujjana* places 'being' as that which is *first*. This type of priority of 'being', is the necessary basis for the *puthujjana*'s sense of 'Self'. The notion of constancy, the unchanging nature of the experience as a whole, the independence, is the "extra-temporal changeless 'self"'[60] of the *puthujjana.* '(The being of) Self' is then the reason for things to appear ,they are appearing *for* it.[61] This arrangement, this *particular [dis]order* of things is also called: *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.

If, presumably, a *puthujjana* wants to abandon this view, which is the root of all suffering, the authentic pursuit must continue. What he has to see is that this notion of 'Self', despite its independent character, also *appears*. No matter how elusive or ambiguous it might be—it has to be seen as such: as an elusive thing. Only after this is it is possible for a *puthujjana* to see that the order of things imposed by the presence of an assumed 'extra-temporal' phenomena in his experience is the *wrong order*. Based on things' appearance, and based on the sense of the experience as a whole, there is no justifiable reason for him to assume any primacy of the sense of unchangeability any longer. *There is* 'the sense of unchangeability' and that too *appears*. Thus, the unchanging '(sense of) being' was, in a wholly gratuitous manner, given priority over the appearance of things by being assumed as something which does not appear. The reason for this was simply because this notion of priority was never *noticed*. [62] If a *puthujjana* sees this *existing* notion that *appears*, (which is *that,* which is his 'Self'), a sight of inseparability between 'existence' and 'appearance' will emerge. If a thing exists, that is because it appears; if it appears, that is it exists. Neither the appearance nor existence can be discerned or conceived without each other, and that is what is meant by "to be is to be perceived"—*esse est percipi*. At this phase, the assumption of a hidden reality *behind* the appearance is almost inconceivable. The *puthujjana* understands that if anything is to exist, it *has to* appear.[63]

[59] A reader might notice here the discrepancy between what I've just said and the views one can find in Heidegger's or Sartre's works. These philosophers maintain the notion (in different degrees) of the separation between my being, i. e. the 'I', and being of things, the objects of the experience which 'I' encounters. For example Sartre developed a fundamental division of being-in-itself and being-for-itself, which he then tried, and consequently failed, to reconcile in Being and Nothingess. In-itself is not more real than for-itself, (i. e. 'me' or '[my] consciousness'), and the reverse is also true; in order for it to exist it requires for-itself, as much as for-itself requires the in-itself. And it is not possible, in good faith, to think of or regard the in-itself independently of consciousness, nor consciousness independently of the in-itself, not even in one's imagination. 'Matter', rūpa, needs consciousness in order to find its footing in appearance, without it, it is inconceivable. (Cf. the mutually dependent relationship between nāmarūpa and viññāṇa.) In brief: whenever there are things, there is me; whenever there is me, there are things. (Hence one has to understand sabbe dhamma anatta—all things are not-self.) Whether it is 'being' of things that we are looking at, or my 'being', the point is that there is 'being'—bhava is there. This is also why, the reader will notice I use 'existence' and 'being' interchangeably. Whether it is 'mine', or not, whether it is personal or impersonal, large or small, visible or invisible, far or near, any 'being' whatsoever means that bhava is there; it is, it exists. As long as that is the case, 'I' (or at least some degree of the conceit 'I am') will be present.

[60] NoD, ATTĀ.

[61] "…the phenomenon remains, for"to appear" supposes in essence somebody to whom to appear. "—J.—P. Sartre, Being and Nothingness, translated by Hazel E. Barnes. London: Methuen, 1957, 1969; New York: Philosophical Library, 1957, p. 2.

[62] Hence the nature of it also appearing was obscured.

[63] Sartre (op. cit. , p. 6) seems to have become aware of this, but then chose to disagree: "What determines the being of the appearance is the fact that it appears. And since we have restricted reality to the phenomenon, we can say of the phenomenon that it is as it appears. Why not push the idea to its limit and say that the being of the appearance is its appearing? This is simply a way of choosing new

Thus, one's authenticity grows. The attitude has undergone a considerable change, from a *puthujjana* not even being aware of his own existence, over the notion that things appear *because* they exist, up to now, where 'to appear' and 'to exist' means just the same. Although this is certainly far better than anything before, nevertheless this attitude doesn't quite yet free the *puthujjana* from suffering. He has to continue, but this is as far as he can go on his own. No matter how hard he tries to understand the existence, any attempt to do so will throw him onto the appearance, and *vice versa*—whenever he looks at the appearance all he is going to see is the existence. In one way or another, the *puthujjana* will not be able to prevent himself from falling into a view that 'appearance' and 'existence' are the *same*,[64] or—since the difference is perceived between them—he might think that they are *different*.[65] But then the 'sameness' is still there, so perhaps they are *both-the-same-and-different*. Consequently, he can negate the whole thing and think that they are *neither-the-same-nor-different*. In either case, he remains *ignorant* in regard to the two; he remains a *puthujjana*. If he is to change this, he needs help from the *outside*; it has to come to him *externally*. The *puthujjana* is not able (i.e. it is structurally impossible) to "step out" of his experience, and see his situation of 'being-a-*puthujjana*' as a whole. No matter how far he steps back, he carries his ignorance with him. Only coming across the Buddha's Teaching can offer him an *outside perspective* of himself, which if cultivated can 'turn him' into a non-*puthujjana*.[66]

The Teaching tells him that 'existence' cannot be conceived anywhere *apart from* 'appearance', but also that it is *not* 'appearance' as such; furthermore, and even more importantly, it also tells him that 'existence' does not depend on 'appearance' directly, it depends on the 'assumption' (*upādāna*)[67] *in regard to* that which appears,[68] and this means nothing else then that the appearance, for its appearing, *does not require* existence at all—it is actually better *without it*.[69]

Na kho, āvuso visākha, taññeva upādānaṃ te pañcupādānakkhandhā, nāpi aññatra pañcahupādānakkhandhehi upādānaṃ. Yo kho, āvuso visākha, pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu chandarāgo taṃ tattha upādānan"ti

"The five assumed aggregates, friend Visākha, are not just assuming; but neither is there assumption apart

words to clothe the old"Esse est percipi"of Berkeley… It seems that the famous formula of Berkeley cannot satisfy us—for two essential reasons, one concerning the nature of percipi, the other that of the percipere." Sartre then goes on to construe consciousness into a form of an 'empty' absolute which is "pure 'appearance' in the sense that it exists only to the degree to which appears." (op. cit., p. 12). There is no question of things existing to the degree they appear, however there is no such thing as 'pure appearance' in the sense of appearance independent of that which has appeared, since every appearance has to be appearance of something. Even if someone says: "Pure appearance"—that designation of that "pure appearance" is that which stands for that which is "pure appearance", thus that "pure appearance" is not pure—Sartre's "empty absolute" is thus contradictio in terminis.

[64]"The first being which we meet in our ontological inquiry is the being of the appearance. Is it itself an appearance?… In other words, is the being which discloses itself to me, which appears to me, of the same nature as the being of existents which appear to me?"—Sartre, op. cit. p. 4.

[65]"…the being of the phenomenon can not be reduced to the phenomenon of being."—Sartre, op. cit. p. 6.

[66]"The puthujjana's experience is (saṅkhāra-)dukkha from top to bottom, and the consequence is that he has no way of knowing dukkha for himself; for however much he 'steps back' from himself in a reflexive effort he still takes dukkha with him…""—CtP, p. 482; and on the p. 38 of the same work:"The Dhamma gives the puthujjana the outside view of avijjā, which is inherently unobtainable for him by unaided reflexion (in the ariyasāvaka this view has, as it were, 'taken' like a graft, and is perpetually available."

[67]Upādāna is defined by the PTS Pali-English Dictionary as follows: 1) lit. substratum by means of which an active process is kept alive or going; fuel, supply, provision… 2) 'drawing upon', grasping, taking up…; Assumption, assuming according to Chambers Concise Dictionary means: to adopt, to take in, to take upon oneself, to take for granted; [Latin term is assūměre, assumptum: (ad) to (sūměre) take]. The nature of the assumption in general, can be described as follows: the assumption takes its object for granted, and it does so without having a knowledge of whether that thing which is being 'taken up' actually is in the way that it is taken up. As a matter of fact, not having a knowledge of this is the fundamental prerequisite for the assumption to manifest, because if the object is known for what it is, there wouldn't be a need to assume it for what it is. Knowledge and assumption (vijjā and upādāna) are mutually exclusive. However, upādāna is there (as pañc'upādānakkhandā) which means that the assumption of what the five aggregates are, preceeds that which five aggregates are. In this way the beginingless avijjā puts the assumption first, as something "in front", something more fundamental, that the five aggregates which are taken up. This is done in direct violation of the fact that upādāna cannot be anywhere apart from the five aggregates, that it actually requires them for its existence. Thus, assumption assumes priority over that which is already there. That 'assumed assumption' (or taking for granted that which is taken for granted) becomes the puthujjana's 'norm' of things' existence, it 'measures' them according what it thinks they are, not for what they are. The extent of the assumption determines the extent of this measure (i. e. the existence)— upādānapaccāya bhavo. (Cf. Sartre, op. cit., p. 2: "…then the appearance becomes full positivity; its essence is an 'appearing' which is no longer opposed to being but on the contrary is the measure of it.")

[68]He assumes: "It is the same; it is different; it is both-the-same-and-different; it is neither-the-same-nor-different."

[69]"Craving, however, is a gratuitous (though beginningless) parasite on the intentional structure described here, and its necessity is not to be deduced from the necessity of intention in all experience. Intention does not imply craving—a hard thing to understand!"—NoD, CETANĀ.

from the five assumed aggregates. That, friend Visākha, in the five assumed aggregates which is desire-&-lust, that assumption is therein." (MN 44/i,299-300)

Thus this inquiry has passed 'through' the *puthujjana*'s 'being', which must not be either denied (dismissed) or justified (explained), but established as a *phenomenon.* It was seen that this phenomenon, far from being a reason because of which things appear, actually depends on the *puthujjana's assumption* in regard to *that which appears*. In the beginning, the *puthujjana*'s existence was a mere fact, of which he was barely aware and this fact represented his thoroughly inauthentic Self. However, now his existence has not only 'appeared' for him, it was seen that 'existence' cannot even be conceived *without* that which appears. In this way the roles were slowly reversed and the priority of existence over the appearance of things has faded. Now, with the Buddha's aid, a *puthujjana* can further see that actually the existence is not that which appears—it never was. It is the appearance that *exists*, by him *assuming* it (or by being *ignorant* in regard to it.) The existence, in order to be, requires *maintaining* (hence *upādānapaccāya bhavo*). In this way a new perspective has emerged on the relationship between existence and appearance, which reveals that, initially, the *puthujjana* had the whole picture upside-down. The further pursuit of this principle would simply carry further right through the center of *puthujjana*'s being (who at that point would cease to be a *puthujjana*) and complete the 'reversal' of this inverted experience of his, in the same manner as one would turn a sleeve inside-out. At that point that *individual*'s Being would cease without remainder.

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

Papañca-Saññā-Sankhā

This compound has represented, to paraphrase John D. Ireland from his Udāna translation notes, a stumbling block which even the ancient commentaries find difficult to define. If the importance of the term is to be deduced from the extent of its difficulty then indeed understanding of this compound carries a lot of significance in regard to grasping of the Buddha's Teaching.

There are various translations of *papañca-saññā-sankhā*, with currently the most prominent ones being either Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's "notions [born of] mental proliferations" translating the term *papañca* as 'proliferation'; or Ven. Ñāṇamoli Thera's "calculations of perceptions of diversifications" where he renders papañca as 'diversification'. Beyond these two, plus the PTS Dictionary definition, I am not familiar in detail with any other different interpretations of this compound. I am aware that Ven. Ñāṇananda in his "Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought" addresses this topic to a certain degree and also that Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi based his views of the term upon this interpretation[70] but I, myself, have never actually read Ven. Ñāṇananda's book so my view on this matter will come from perhaps, to some extent, a different angle.

To start with, the respective terms 'diversification' and 'proliferation' do not deviate from the meaning of *papañca*. According to the PTS dictionary, *papañca* is "expansion, diffuseness, manifoldedness" or "obstacle, hindrance or delay". The other members of the compound are defined as *saññā* (perception) and *sankhā* (sign or characteristic). So the above-mentioned translations would, to some degree, convey the nature of *papañca-saññā-sankhā* quite accurately and, as Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi says in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*[71] (endnote no. 229, p. 1204-5), "no rendering [of this compound] is utterly beyond doubt". The question which raises itself then is not how to etymologically trace the exact roots and origination of the compound, since such, a task in this case proves impossible in the absolute sense (and many seem to agree with this). Rather, it is better to focus and try to find out *within* one's own experience and practice what is implied existentially and phenomenologically in the Suttas by this term.

At the risk of being incomprehensible on some points, I would try to use 'descriptive' language, rather than overly technical terms as people's general views are already quite firm in regard to such terminology and it is very likely that they will be coming from a quite different place than me, probably *too* different which could obstruct them from understanding what I'm trying to say. In order to reduce this possibility to a

[70] Which, as I will attempt to show in this essay, is over-simplified.

[71] Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, Third edition 2005.

minimum I thought of using some more common terms in my descriptions which carry less chance of being misunderstood. I hope I won't miss the mark too much.

Those familiar with phenomenology and the philosophy of existence should not have any problems in understanding a statement like all our experience is intentional or teleological or simply—significant. Each thing (*dhamma*) which is being experienced in our everyday life has, as its *inherent nature*, to point to other thing(s), within the experience as a whole. The thing's significance is not something 'steady' or 'inchangeable', although it often might appear so. The significance of a thing is, rather, something which is being *acquired* through the *repetition* of the respective experiences of that very thing. During this, the whole perception of a thing comes to 'grow' in a course of time, so to speak, and though there are certainly significances which are *recognized* as common to all people, at a more fundamental level they are all *individually* acquired and carried by each of us[72].

Without going into greater details let us say that in the Suttas this intentionality of experience is what is meant by the statement "with the grain" or *anuloma*. Actually, it is probably better to be more precise and to re-qualify this and say: taking for granted this intentionality, holding it and appropriating it, makes this *with* of "with the grain" to appear. In the *arahant*'s case, the ignorance is completely destroyed, yet the grain still remains, i.e. things *do not* stop pointing to other things, but this 'with' ceases to exist and is being replaced by 'against' as a result of which we get "against the grain"—*patiloma*. What has changed is the fundamental *direction* of regarding this very *directionality of experience*. Thus, even in the case of complete liberation things continue to be teleological or 'with purpose' so they still point to other things and so on. All this is being mentioned for the reason that the term *papañca* is probably too often misunderstood to simply mean 'mental proliferation', 'when one thinks or analyzes too much' or something like that. Although these things do imply *papañca* (or to be more precise ignorance and desire-and-lust), the above said nevertheless shows us that if *papañca* is anything, it is certainly more fundamental than that. In support of this we may add that *papañca* is frequently linked with *mañ̃anā*, 'conceving' (for which see Mūlapariyāya Sutta, MN 1) which certainly represents the most fundamental 'occurrence' in a mind affected with ignorance. Thus, what *papañca* would imply is nothing less than this very *intentionality* of our experience and its *tendency* to grow and expand. However this can happen only when that 'with' is present i.e. when the mind is not free from the bonds of ignorance and when it keeps following things in their appearance— "…his consciousness flows after the sign of form [sound, smell, tastes, touches, thoughts], is tied and shackled by gratification in the sign of form, if fettered by the fetter of gratification…"[73]. And surely enough it is said that the *arahant* is *nippapañca*—without diversifications, free from any attachments (*upadhi*), free from burden *accumulated* in the past.

Thus, one's world (everything which appears—*nāma-rūpa*), expands. One's views, desires etc. expand too, yet this should not be understood in a momentary sense, which would suggest that they will somehow 'shrink' afterwards[74] by themselves. Their *intensity* or the *intensity of their presence*, once 'accumulated' i.e. came to being, is being 'assumed' or 'held' (*upādāna*) at that (new) face value. When this happens—and it happens through the repetition of [ignorant] actions as said above—consciousness "becomes established" upon that *degree of presence*, which then becomes the *actual experience* of that *thing*. Thus, the intensity of experience, that which appears as *nāma-rūpa* grows (for more details see Mahānidāna Sutta, DN 15 [ii,63]). This kind of pattern stretches from the most fundamental levels of our existence (as seen in Mūlapariyāya Sutta), up to the coarsest ones which we might say are, "resorting to rods and weapons, of quarrels, brawls, disputes, recrimination, malicious words and false speech[75]…", that is *the directly painful actions resulting from one's ignorance*. Thus, based on the above, *papañca* represents the 'diffusion' of this fundamental underlying principle with ignorance being *necessarily present*, and consequently *papañca-saññā-sankhā* are all 'calculations' or 'notions', perceived and originated as a result of taking this principle of diffusion for granted i.e. not understanding it.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that this whole situation would be much clearer if we can bear in mind

[72] Preferences and values being perhaps too coarse yet a good enough example of this.

[73] Uddhesavibhanga Sutta, MN 138. [iii,225]

[74] They would only do so in the arahant's case.

[75] Madhupiṇḍika Sutta, MN 18; translation taken from The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, Third edition 2005, p. 202 [i,109].

Ven. Ñāṇavīra Thera's description of the infinite hierarchy of consciousness, the different levels of generality of *nāma-rūpa—viññāṇa*. That is because *papañca-saññā-sankhā* is not something which appears on a voluntary level, as if one could stop it at any time; it stretches from the most general (reflexive) levels of existence[76]. What one is responsible for, in that whole structure, is "delighting in, welcoming and holding to…" the "source through which perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man…"[77]. Thus the hierarchy of signifying things continues to arise (cease and change-while-standing) but it no longer grows; it is "cut off at the root, made like a palm stump". Its root was ignorance in itself and with its absence everything founded upon it comes to an end—one is free. In other words the respective experiences of the *puthujjana* and *arahant* alike, share the same fundamental nature of impermanence (arising and ceasing) but the respective *intensities* of those experiences are changed; for the *arahant feeling none* of it[78] and for the *puthujjana* dependant on the amount of ignorance being present. More ignorance, more 'intensity', things appear as more 'pressing' and one is easily prone to giving in to desire-and-lust. The arising of things in the *puthujjana*'s mind brings diffusion of perceptions and notions which, while not understood at its roots, will in return diffuse further and further and so on. This cannot happen in the *arahant*'s mind any more. His consciousness has 'ceased' so there is nothing to follow and diversify upon this teleological characteristic of the existential structure, which will remain only until his aggregates 'break apart'.

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

The Infinity of The Mind (Notes on AN 1.51)

Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. Tañca kho āgantukehi upakkilesehi upakkiliṭṭham. Taṃ assutavā puthujjano yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. Tasmā 'assutavato puthujjanassa cittabhāvanā natthī'ti vadāmī"ti.

"Bright, monks, is the mind. It is superimposed by the defiling obstructions. The uninstructed worldling does not know this. For the uninstructed worldling, therefore, there is no development of mind."

Pabhassaram—this could be translated as 'bright', and it should be regarded as something lit up, shining, effulgent or *lucid*. To find out how this term should be understood, one can bring to mind the term *ākāsa*—space—which literally means 'shining forth', in the sense of a space which is lit up. In MN 49, we can see that consciousness is referred to as *viññāṇaṃ anidassanaṃ anantaṃ sabbato pabhaṃ,* where 'non-indicative', 'infinite' (or endless, limitless) and 'completely radiant' (i.e. utterly and fundamentally lucid, not to be understood in a sense of mystically beaming rays of light or similar), are the terms referring to *viññāṇa*.[79] The whole point is that 'brightness' is an epithet describing the inherently *infinite structure* of the mind, which is 'defiled' by the obstructions (i.e. made *finite*). In SN 35.202 the Buddha said:

How, friends, does one not leak? Here, friends, having seen form with eye, a monk does not incline towards pleasing forms, he is not affected by displeasing forms. He lives aware of the body there and with mind that is boundless.

A monk can dwell and live his life with a "boundless mind".[80] [81] He has understood the nature of the body *there* together with the arisen structure of the present experience,[82] which is infinite. By understanding the infinite or boundless, any boundaries and finiteness that were present as a result of that lack of understanding, are removed. In other words, the 'brightness' or 'lucidity' or 'infinity' or 'boundlessness' are the ways of

[76] Compare also the nature of the five hindrances. It takes the first jhāna for one to be able to suppress them, which speaks for itself, since such strength of one's concentration is enough for becoming an arahant (if there is wisdom, of course).

[77] op. cit. p. 202.

[78] Compare Ven. Sāriputta's answer to Ven. Udāyi when the later asked him what is there that is pleasant when there is nothing felt [in nibbāna]—"Just this is pleasant, friend, that herein there is nothing felt", AN iv,414.

[79] Ñāṇavīra Thera took sabbatopabhaṃ to be sabbato-apahaṃ (from apahoti, a+pahoti), in which case this compound would be synonymous with anidassanaṃ, 'non-indicative' or 'not-producing'(Self). (Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera—Clearing the Path (2010), 'Note on Paṭiccasamuppāda', footnote j, p.28). Whether he was right or wrong in reading it like this, it is clear here that either way the context is scarcely affected—the infinity of consciousness does not indicate Self, does not produce Self, and it is fundamentally lucid, radiant, and unobstructed.

[80] Cf. MN 38.

[81] This also indicates that the states of 'boundlessness', 'infinity' and similar that are mentioned in the Suttas are not exclusively reserved for "meditation attainments", as they are commonly regarded.

[82] Cf. "There is just this body and name-and-form externally…"—SN 12.19.

describing the *property* of the fundamental structure of experience, which is the very reason why overcoming the obstructions is possible.

*Āgantuk*a—here it is translated as 'superimposed'. It can also mean adventitious, incidental, accessory. The main point that has to be borne in mind is that the 'obstructions' are "incidental", in the sense that they are not caused by the *pabhassaramidaṃ cittaṃ,* but are nevertheless there. The defiling obstructions do not have anything in common with the brightness of the mind; they are simply "layered" there, superimposed without actually affecting the infinite structure. Thus, since the infinite mind does not need those obstructions, it can be rightly said that they are completely gratuitous.[83]

So, obstructions, or more precisely *avijjā*, have no *first point* when they are manifested before which mind was pure, bright and unpolluted. Because of this it is not correct to refer to 'bright mind' as an *original thing*, as if it existed in a pure state *before* the obstructions arrived. Since there is no beginning to the infinity, nor to the beginningless *avijjā*, the notions of "first this, then that" have no place to apply. So how shall this evident priority of the 'bright mind' be understood then? The answer is straight—in an atemporal, structural sense. The infinity of the mind precedes *avijjā* ontologically, so to speak, while they are there both, *simultaneously present.* This should also shed some light onto why the structure of the mind does not imply nor require the obstructions (hence they are called 'obstructions')—they are superfluous, unnecessary, superimposed. Yet, the *uppakilesā* are there, and are not to be found elsewhere.[84] To put this all in different words: the infinity of one's mind is atemporally more fundamental than one's own nescience in regard to it. Furthermore, it is because of the nescience in regard to the *nature of infinity*, that *avijjā* is *a beginningless phenomenon*. If infinity has no beginning, how could the fundamental ignorance of that be different?

This is not all, there are further implications of one's ignorance of the infinite structure—namely, *permanence.* The uninstructed worldling confuses the notion of infinity (no beginning, no end) with the notion of *eternity*, or rather *identifies* the two. In this way, a present experience is regarded as eternal or permanent. What a *puthujjana* does not see is that eternity implies infinity, but the infinity does not imply eternity.[85] Because of the nescience in regard to this, the *puthujjana's* experience of infinity *assumes* permanence. In other words, his *citta* is regarded as permanent; he regards his Self as permanent. If one would be able to see the infinity without eternity, or even to see it as impermanent, the notion of Self, and everything else that depended upon it, (which required the notion of permanence), would cease without a remainder. Knowing infinity as something present (i.e. arisen) but impermanent (for the very reason that it has *arisen* on its own accord), clears the mind of any obstructions, any superimposed interferences with the infinite structure. Hence it is said that the *arahant's* mind is *immeasurable.*[86] His *citta* has been developed to the structurally more fundamental state, and it is because this state was always *possible* (but not *actual*)[87] that transcending the obstructions was feasible. In other words, if one's mind was *inherently* ignorant—i.e. *avijjā* structurally preceded any experience—arahantship would not be possible. (See footnote [5] above).[88]

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

Not Perceiving the Feeling (Notes on MN 43)

Friend, feeling and perception and consciousness-these things are associated, not disassociated. It is not possible to separate them and by separating them point out the difference [between them]. What one feels, that one perceives.

[83]"Craving, however, is a gratuitous (though beginningless) parasite on the intentional structure described here, and its necessity is not to be deduced from the necessity of intention in all experience. Intention does not imply craving—a hard thing to understand! But if intention did imply craving, arahatta would be out of the question, and there would be no escape."—Ñāṇavīra Thera, op. cit., footnote f, p. 56.

[84]Cf. MN 44.

[85]The reader might notice that Ñāṇavīra Thera in 'Fundamental Structure' (op.cit. p. 107) refers to the endurance of a thing as 'eternal'. This structural 'eternity' is what is meant here by 'infinity'. It is just how one decides to designate these terms. If we were to choose the term 'eternal' to describe the property of the structure, we would additionally have to qualify it by saying: "A thing endures for ever. A thing is eternal… until it ceases." I, personally, prefer 'infinite' so that the distinction between the inherent nature of the arisen experience (infinity) becomes apparent from the puthujjana's appropriation of it (eternity).

[86]Cf. AN 3.115 & SN 35.202.

[87]Cf. nibbānadhātu

[88]For these very reasons the Buddha was able to "rediscover" the path which lay there. For more cf. SN 12.65.

What one perceives, that one cognizes. Therefore, these things are associated not disassociated. It is not possible to separate them and by separating them point out the difference[between them].-MN 43.

The Teaching is for the one who feels. When one thinks "this is what I feel", that is what one *thinks*, not what one *feels*. Feeling cannot be thought, it cannot be perceived. What one perceives is one's perception, what one feels is one's feeling.[89] Feeling and perception are simply *there*, superimposed, independent and different in nature.

"What one feels, that one perceives."

Thinking that it is *the same* thing that one feels and *simultaneously* perceives, means one *assumes* that [same] thing as *independent* of that feeling and perception. That thing *is*.

Thinking that it is *a different* thing that one feels and *simultaneously* perceives, means one *assumes* that [different] thing as *independent* of that feeling and perception. That thing *is*.

Thinking that it is *both-the-same-and-different* thing that one feels and *simultaneously* perceives, means one *assumes* that [both-the-same-and-different] thing as *independent* of that feeling and perception. That thing *is*.

Thinking that it is *neither-the-same-nor-different* thing that one feels and *simultaneously* perceives, means one *assumes* that [neither-the-same-nor-different] thing as *independent* of that feeling and perception. That thing *is*.

Thus, through that assumption, one *identifies* that thing.

Whether one thinks it is the same, or different, or both or neither, feeling is there, *regardless* of the perception in regard to it. Thus, a feeling cannot be thought, it can only be *felt*. A perception cannot be felt, it can only be *perceived*. One has to learn *how to feel*, or how to *know* 'that because of which' the feeling is.[90] This means how to *discern* it from that which perception is. This cannot be done by separating feeling and perception and examining them individually.[91] So how can one do it then?-

By *feeling* [the feeling]. By *perceiving* [the perception]. By *cognizing* [the cognizance].

By *cognizing feeling*-while-perceiving.

By *understanding* cognizing.

By *not-conceiving* perception.

If the superimposition of these two completely independent simultaneously present domains is understood, the assumption of *an independent thing*,[92] outside of feeling and perception ceases to be "a bridge" for the two. The 'thing' which is being *identified* (as the same, different, both-the-same-and-different, neither-the-same-nor-different), is that "bridge" and feeling and perception 'meet' or 'come together' because of it. That thing is assumed *to be that* which one *feels* and *perceives*.[93] In this way, feeling and perception (and consciousness) also come to be *identified*.[94] Thus, that '[assumption of a] thing' which identifies the *unidentifiable* [95]feeling and perception makes them *manifest in* that *identity*-feeling and perception come to *exist*. The identity feels, the identity perceives-*I* feel, *I* perceive.

One feels pleasure, one feels pain, one feels neither-pain-nor-pleasure.

[89]Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Clearing the Path, SAÑÑĀ, §2.

[90]Or how to not-conceive 'that because of which' perception is.

[91]Thinking it in isolation from the present experience (i.e. from perception and consciousness) would amount to this. Since the separation cannot actually occur (not even in one's imagination), all one can do is assume that which is different between those three.

[92]The [sense of] independence is the inevitable outcome of the presence of the assumption in one's experience. It is not therefore accidental that one's sense of Self is always regarded as an extra-temporal and changeless, i.e. independent (from the rest of the experience). Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, op.cit., ATTĀ, §1 and L.147, §3.

[93]Thus, because of this assumption, one feels the thing, not one's feelings; one perceives the thing, not one's perception. By doing so one conceives things different to what they are, and when those things change one suffers.

[94]Cf. my essay Determining Determinations. 'That because of which' [feeling, perception, consciousness are] is assumed as 'that which' feeling, perception, consciousness 'are'.

[95]"It is not possible to separate them and by separating them point out the difference…"-MN 43.

One perceives blue, one perceives yellow, one perceives red, one perceives white.[96]

One can be *aware* of what one feels; one can also be *aware* of what one perceives. *Through understanding that because of which one is aware of,* one *knows* the feeling and perception *structurally* cannot overlap or merge or "be bridged" or identified;[97] This makes the *assumption* in regard to feeling and perception (as the same, different, both-the-same-and-different, neither-the-same-nor-different),[98] *redundant*, *irrelevant*, *not worth maintaining*. Why? Because it does not and it cannot make *any difference* to the *structural order* of things (feeling feels, perception perceives). If it could, the freedom from suffering would not be possible.[99] Fully understanding that whichever way one's thought (assumption) goes, the feeling cannot be *identified* as (the same, different, both-the-same-and-different, neither-the-same-nor-different from) perception, leaves that feeling and that perception just standing there-*indifferent* to each other.[100] [101]

Agreeable perception is assumed *to be that* which is pleasantly felt;

Disagreeable perception is assumed *to be that* which is unpleasantly felt;

Neutral perception is assumed *to be that* which is neutrally felt.

Thus, one thinks it is *this sight* [102](sounds, smells…thoughts) *that is felt*. Because of that feeling one sets upon to 'affect' those sights (sounds, smells, …thoughts), sets upon to change them, modify them, adjust them, pursue them, avoid them; one gets *entangled* in the sights (sounds, smells…thoughts) *on account of what* one feels *when they are* . Knowing that feeling is *just there*-being felt, and perception is *just there*-being perceived, makes further entanglement *impossible*, and any entanglement that was there[103] is made redundant, disowned, dropped down, never to picked up again. Why? Because it was structurally impossible to get entangled in the first place, but until one has fully understood that, one's 'not-knowing-that-one-cannot-be-entangled' *was one's entanglement.* When one understands that the arisen things cannot structurally *relate* to each other-feeling feels the feeling, perception perceives the perception[104] –*concern* becomes impossible or *inconceivable-dukkha* completely ceases, never to arise again.

Resistance and Designation (Notes on DN 15)

Nāmarūpapaccayā phasso'ti iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ, tadānanda, imināpetaṃ pariyāyena veditabbaṃ, yathā nāmarūpapaccayā phasso. Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmakā-yassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu asati api nu kho rūpakāye adhivacanasamphasso paññāyethā ti?

No hetaṃ, bhante.

Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi rūpakāyassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho nāmakāye paṭighasamphasso paññāyethā ti?

No hetaṃ, bhante.

Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāmakāyassa ca rūpakāyassa ca paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho adhivacanasamphasso vā paṭighasamphasso vā paññāyethā ti?

No hetaṃ, bhante.

Yehi, Ānanda, ākārehi yehi liṅgehi yehi nimittehi yehi uddesehi nāma-rūpassa paññatti hoti, tesu ākāresu tesu ākāresu tesu liṅgesu tesu nimittesu tesu uddesesu tesu uddesesu asati, api nu kho phasso paññā-yethā ti?

[96] Cf. MN 43.
[97] Or cross into each other's domains.
[98] All of these are forms of identity.
[99] Cf. my essay The Infinity of Mind.
[100] y understanding this structural 'indifference', one feels indifferent to the whole structure-which is what upekkhā is.
[101] It is the nature of the superimposition that breeds this indifference, since concern is in its nature always in relation to something.
[102] Disagreeable (or agreeable, or neutral)
[103] In the past, or possible in the future, or standing there in the present.
[104] Matter matters, feeling feels, perception perceives, determinations determine, consciousness cognizes.

No hetaṃ, bhante.

Tasmātihānanda, eseva hetu etaṃ nidānaṃ esa samudayo esa paccayo phassassa, yadidaṃ nāmarūpaṃ.

" 'With name-&-matter as condition, contact', so it was said: how it is, Ānanda, that with name-&-matter as condition there is contact should be seen in this manner. Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which the name-body is described,—they being absent, would designation-contact be manifest in the matter-body?

-No indeed, lord.

-Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which the matter-body is described,—they being absent, would resistance-contact be manifest in the name-body?

-No indeed, lord.

-Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which the name-body and the matter-body are described,—they being absent, would either designation-contact or resistance-contact be manifest?

-No indeed, lord.

-Those tokens, Ānanda, those marks, those signs, those indications by which name-&-matter is described,—they being absent, would contact be manifest?

-No indeed, lord.

-Therefore, Ānanda, just this is the reason, this is the occasion, this is the arising, this is the condition of contact, that is to say name-&-matter."

1. 'Matter' is required for 'name' to be present. If there would not be that which is 'named', 'name' would not be able to arise. If on the other hand, 'name' is absent, 'matter' would simply be inconceivable. Thus, there is no 'name' without 'matter' and there is no 'matter' without 'name', hence-*name-&-matter*. In this way 'name' *designates* the resistance, and 'matter' *resists* the designation. Without 'name'(-body), there would not be any designation manifested in 'matter'(-body), but without 'matter'(-body), there would not be any resistance manifested in the 'name'(-body). It is these respective *manifestations* of 'designation' and 'resistance' that are *puthujjana's* problem.

2. With name-&-matter, he *assumes* that it is *this* 'matter' that is *designated.* Through that *assumption,* designation *manifests* in that matter body[105]. In this way one's 'matter' is *designated*-one is *contacted*.

With name-&-matter, he *assumes* that it is *this* 'name' that is *resisted.* Through that *assumption,* resistance *manifests* in that name-body. In this way one's 'name' is *resisted*-one is *contacted*.

He assumes that it is *this* 'matter' that is designated.

He assumes it is the *same* 'matter' that is designated and is the condition for 'name'; he assumes it is a *different* 'matter' that is designated and is the condition for 'name'; He assumes it is *both-same-&-different* matter that is designated and is the condition for 'name'; He assumes it is *neither-same-nor-different* 'matter' that is designated and is the condition for 'name'. Either way-the assumption is *there.*

That which resists him he designates as the same, different, both-same-&-different, or neither same-nor-different, as that because of which 'name' is there. The designation *manifests* in this 'matter'.[106]

Thus, he designates (*contacts*) his resistance. Contact is there.

He assumes that it is *this* 'name' that is resisted.

He assumes it is the *same* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; He assumes it is a *different* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; He assumes it is *both-same-&-different* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; He assumes it is *neither-same-nor-different* 'name' that is resisted and is the condition for 'matter'; Either way-the assumption is *there.*

[105] upādānapaccayā bhavo.

[106] 'Name' assumes existence in 'matter'-'name' exists.

That which is designated he resists as the same, different, both-same-&-different, or neither same-nor-different, as that because of which 'matter' is there. The resistance *manifests* in this 'name'.[107]

Thus, he resists (*contacts*) his designation. Contact is there.

3. *Cf. Mūḷapariyāya Sutta*, MN 1:

Pathaviṃ pathavito sañjānāti; pathaviṃ pathavito saññatvā pathaviṃ maññati, pathaviyā maññati, pathavito maññati, pathaviṃ meti maññati, pathaviṃ abhinandati. taṃ kissa hetu? 'apariññātaṃ tassā'ti vadāmi.

"From earth, he has a percept of earth; having had from earth a percept, he conceives [that to be] earth, he conceives [that to be] in earth, he conceives [that to be] out of earth, he conceives earth as 'mine', he delights earth. Why is that? He has not fully understood it, I say…"

What a *puthujjana* has to realise is that regardless of *what* he perceives, it is always his *perception* that is perceived. Whether it is 'earth', 'water', 'fire', 'air' or any other thing that MN 1 mentions, all one will ever perceive (*puthujjana* and *arahant* alike) is one's own perception of that 'matter'.[108] This is saying nothing else than 'matter' is and will *always be outside* of one's reach, outside of that which has appeared.[109] Perception is that which is perceived, but perception would not be possible if there is no matter to be perceived; on the other hand matter would be *inconceivable* if perception was indiscernible. If one thinks "it is because of the matter, that perception is there", *that* thought is *perceived*, which means that *that* which is 'matter' *in that thought* is also perceived. But since it is only perception that can be perceived, that 'matter' which is perceived in that thought, cannot be that 'matter' which cannot be perceived, since it is perceived. In this way, *from* 'matter', a *puthujjana* has a percept of 'matter', which he *conceives* to be that *same* 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter. Or he conceives it to be *different* 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter. Or he conceives it to be *both-same &-different* 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter. Or he conceives it to be *neither-same-nor-different* 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter. Either way 'matter' is *conceived*. He becomes responsible for the *manifestation* of the conceiving of that 'matter', he "makes" that 'matter' *exist*.[110] That "creation" is *his*-thus it is '*my*' 'matter'.[111] But, since that 'my matter' is conceived as that 'matter' *because of which* there is a percept of matter, then that percept[ion] too becomes '*my perception*'.[112] The same goes for one's feelings and intentions. They are all conceived as *mine*. Since the *puthujjana's* whole experience is *his*, he thinks he *himself is*-the view of Self exists.[113]

4. When consciousness does not indicate any 'me' or 'mine', that 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter, does not manifest itself in that perception (or feeling, or intention)-it does not manifest itself in 'name'. Thus, in perception there is only perception, i.e. in the seen there is only that which is seen, namely-the seen (and so on for all the senses).[114] One ceases to "perceive 'matter"'; one *knows*[115] such a

[107]'Matter' finds footing in 'name'-'matter' exists.Cf. DN 11.

[108]"It would be as wrong to say 'a feeling is perceived' as it would 'a percept is felt' (which mix up saññā and vedanā); but it is quite in order to say 'a feeling, a percept, (that is, a felt thing, a perceived thing) is cognized', which simply means that a feeling or a percept is present (as, indeed, they both are in all experience—see Majjhima v,3 (M.i,293)). Strictly speaking, then, what is cognized is nāmarūpa, whereas what is perceived (or felt) is saññā (or vedanā), i.e. only nāma. This distinction can be shown grammatically. Vijānāti, to cognize, is active voice in sense (taking an objective accusative): consciousness cognizes a phenomenon (nāmarūpa); consciousness is always consciousness of something. Sañjānāti, to perceive, (or vediyati, to feel) is middle voice in sense (taking a cognate accusative): perception perceives [a percept] (or feeling feels [a feeling]). Thus we should say 'a blue thing (= a blueness), a painful thing (= a pain), is cognized', but 'blue is perceived' and 'pain is felt'. (In the Suttas generally, due allowance is to be made for the elasticity in the common usage of words. But in certain passages, and also in one's finer thinking, stricter definition may be required.)"-Ñāṇavīra Thera, Clearing the Path, 2010, p. 92.

[109]Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, Seeking The Path, 2010, p. 40, §§17-18: "[Four mahābhutā]…will always be just below our feet."

[110]Thus, 'matter' can never be perceived, but it can "find footing" in that which is perceived (or felt, or intended).

[111]He delights in his own creation, because it is his own creation.

[112]If one is not to conceive that 'matter' because of which there is a percept of matter, one would not conceive oneself as that because of which there is a perceiver and conceiver of the world. Cf. SN 35.116: The eye… ear… nose… tongue… body… mind… is that in the world by which one is a perceiver and conceiver of the world. Also, cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, op.cit. p. 298: And when shall we 'not be that by which'? … the Buddha tells us: it is when, for us, in the seen there shall be just the seen, and so with the heard, the sensed, and the cognized. And when in the seen is there just the seen? When the seen is no longer seen as 'mine' (etaṃ mama) or as 'I' (eso'ham asmi) or as 'my self' (eso me attā): in brief, when there is no longer, in connexion with the senses, the conceit 'I am', by which 'I am a conceiver of the world'.

[113]That's how the sense of the 'mine' leads to the sense of 'Self'.

[114]Cf. Bāhiya Sutta, Ud. 10/8.

[115]"Wisdom is to be developed…"-MN 43.

thing is impossible or *inconceivable*,[116] one simply *understands*[117]: *there is* matter, *there is* perception (or feeling, or intention), *there is* (non-indicative) consciousness. One *understands*-there are five"heaps".[118] Since one understands them, one ceases to *assume* them. With the cessation of assumption, *that* which they were *assumed to be*, ceases-*bhava* comes to an end.

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

Determining Determinations

1. Feeling, perception and consciousness are always there together.[119] It is impossible to have them arising independently and on their own; when there is one, the other two are present as well. They do not pass into each other's domain[120]: one feels one's feeling, one perceives one's perception, one cognizes one's cognizance. Assuming that it is the same thing that one feels, perceives and cognizes, or assuming that it is a different thing that one feels, perceives, and cognizes, or both-the-same-&-different thing that one feels, perceives, and cognizes, or neither-the-same-nor-different thing that one feels, perceives, and cognizes, means that *assumed thing* is *there*-it *exists*. One *conceives it* through one's feeling, one's perception, and one's cognizance. One conceives that thing because of which feeling, perception and cognizance are there, *as that thing* because of which feeling, perception and cognizance are there. But since all one can ever feel is one's feeling; all one can ever perceive is one's perception; all one can ever cognize is one's cognizance-*that thing* which is conceived *as that because of* which feeling, perception and cognizance are there, will *have to be* either *a feeling, a perception* or *a cognizance*, and as such *cannot be that because of which* feeling, perception and cognizance are there.[121] By conceiving a feeling, or a perception, or a cognizance *as that because of which* feeling, perception and cognizance are there, one *assumes* that feeling, or perception, or cognizance, *existing independently* of feeling, perception and cognizance, *as that because of which* feeling, perception and cognizance are there. Thus, *that because of which* feeling, perception and cognizance *are* there, *manifests in that* feeling, perception or cognizance which are *assumed to be that because of which* feeling, perception and cognizance are there. Thus, *that because of which* feeling, perception and cognizance *are* there, manifests in that being-it *exists*.

2. That because of which feeling, perception and cognizance are there, is that which is *a necessary condition* for feeling, perception and cognizance that are there, because *without it*, that feeling, perception and cognizance would *not be there*. As a necessary condition, that because of which feeling, perception and cognizance are there, is thus *that by which* feeling, perception and cognizance are *determined*. But since through the assumption, *that by which* feeling, perception and cognizance are *determined*, *manifests as* feeling, perception, or cognizance *because of which* that feeling, perception and cognizance are there, *that* feeling, perception and cognizance *are determined as that by which* feeling, perception and cognizance *are determined*.[122] Thus, through *not knowing* that one can only feel one's feelings, perceive one's perception, cognize one's cognizance,[123] one *determines that by which* one's feeling, perception and cognizance are *determined, as* a feeling, a perception or a cognizance. Through that lack of knowledge, determinations are manifested-*avijjāpaccayā saṅkārā*.

3. One determines one's determinations through assuming that because of which determinations are there.

But that because of which determinations are there cannot be that which is determined by those determinations, since all one can determine are one's determination, not *that because of which* those determinations are

[116] If it were fundamentally subject to one's conceivings, freedom from conceivings would not be possible. Cf. my Notes on AN 1.51.
[117] "…consciousness is to be understood".-MN 43.
[118] Simultaneous, superimposed, utterly indifferent to each other.
[119] Cf. MN 43.
[120] Cf. Notes on DN 15.
[121] Now is probably the time to mention that none of this, nor paragraphs to follow, can be grasped intellectually by the reader. Things that are described here are not to be made sense of in a rationally or philosophically satisfying way, but to be seen in a certain order that they arise in one's experience. Hence the deliberate repetitive style which aligns things in the order they are to be understood (which is also the reason why the Suttas are in that form). Also, refraining from a too particular and established terminology was intentional, since that would most likely lead a reader to assume that he already knows what those terms refer to.
[122] Cf. Khanda Saṃyutta viii,7.
[123] And not that because of which feeling, perception and cognizance are there.

there. Since determinations cannot determine that because of which determinations are there, that because of which determinations are there is that which is non-determinable-it is *undetermined*. If that because of which the determinations are there was *to be* determined, then the escape from determinations would not be possible.[124]

One can know that that because of which determinations are there cannot be determined.

Without knowing *that knowing,* one's knowledge of that because of which determinations are there, *determines* that because of which determinations are there, *as that* because of which determinations are there.[125]

Since that because of which determinations are there *cannot fundamentally be determined,* one's knowledge that *determines* that because of which determinations are there, *leads to* 'assuming' *that* because of which determinations are there *as that* because of which determinations are there.

And since that assumption is then *there*, *that* which is determined as *that because of which* determinations are there, is *there too*, *as that assumed determination* because of which determinations are there-it is *manifested*, it *exists*.

One can know that that because of which determinations are there cannot be determined.

By knowing *that knowing*,[126] one's knowledge of that because of which determinations are there, *does not determine* that because of which determinations are there,[127] *as that* because of which determinations are there.

Since that because of which determinations are there *cannot fundamentally be determined,*[128] one's knowledge that *does not determine* that because of which determinations are there *does not lead to* 'assuming' *that* because of which determinations are there *as that* because of which determinations are there.

And since that assumption is then *not there,* that which is determined as that because of which determinations are there, is *not there either*, *as that assumed determination* because of which determinations are there-it is *not manifested,* it *does not exist.*[129] [130] [131]

by Bhikkhu Ninoslav Ñāṇamoli

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[124]"There is, monks, (a) non-born, non-become, non-made, non-determined. If, monks, there were not that non-born, non-become, non-made, non-determined, an escape from (the) born, become, made, determined would not be discernible. But, because there is (a) non-born, non-become, non-made, non-determined escape from (the) born, become, made, determined is discernible."—Nibbāna Sutta, Ud. 8/3. *Cf. Notes on AN 1.51. Because* the structure of the experience *cannot* fundamentally be appropriated, freedom from the appropriation is possible.

[125]"From nibbāna, he has a percept of nibbāna; having known nibbāna from nibbāna, he conceives nibbāna, he conceives in nibbāna, he conceives out of nibbāna, he conceives 'My' nibbāna, he delights nibbāna. Why is that? He has not fully understood it, I say."—MN 1. Also cf. MN 102, [237].

[126]One knows that whether one intends toward, away, both or neither, in regard to that because of which intentions are there, that because of which intentions are there remains there, regardless of the intention in regard to it. By understanding that it is fundamentally inaccessible to one's intentions, one ceases to crave towards it with those intentions, one ceases to assume it through those intentions, since neither intentions nor that which directly stands upon them, namely-one's assumption-could access it. And one knows that. ['Ignorant intentions' are simply craving, which leads to 'assumption'-taṇhapaccayā upādāna. Cf. Ñāṇavīra Thera, op.cit., p.56, footnote f.: "Intention does not imply craving-a hard thing to understand!"]).

[127]Does not "stand for it" in one's experience, does not "represent it", does not "manifest it".

[128]Cannot be 'accessed' by it.

[129]The assumption is made redundant.

[130]If one thinks "there is that because of which intentions are there, which is inaccessible to those intentions", that thought 'stands for' that because of which intentions are there, and through that thought one assumes access to that inaccessible-inaccessible exists. If one knows that regardless of what a thought or intention stand for, it can never "step outside" of its nature-one can only think one's thoughts (perception perceived) or intend one's intentions, not that because of which that thought/intention are there-one ceases to assume that which that intention stands for, because of which intention is there. Thus, intention remains, while "attempts to access" fade away, since one sees them as pointless and loses interest in them. When those "attempts" are thoroughly subdued, 'the assumption' of that which was assumed "accessible" (through those very attempts) disappears too, never to return.

[131]The only reason why assumption can be made redundant, is because it was redundant in the first place. Not knowing that it was redundant, makes it necessary, until it ceases to be so. And the reason why assumption presents itself as necessary is because it assumes that which is necessary in one's experience, namely-the five aggregates. Thus, the five aggregates, which are necessary in one's experience, come to exist, through the assuming of them as that which is necessary in one's experience. But since they are necessary in one's experience, assuming them as necessary in one's experience is not necessary. But until one knows that, that assumption will exist.